

TOWN AND COUNTRY IN THE OLD SOUTH:
VICKSBURG AND WARREN COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI,
1770-1860

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1991

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am pleased to acknowledge the assistance and encouragement of a number of people, and to thank them for their kindness. Sam Hill and Helen Hill gave me a place to stay when I made my first visit to Jackson. At Vicksburg the staff at the Old Court House Museum received me with open arms. Gordon Cotton's and Blanche Terry's knowledge of Warren County history and of the local documents proved invaluable. The staff at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History was always helpful. In particular I want to thank Anne Lipscombe. Alison Beck, of the Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas, helped me wade through much of the as yet largely uncatalogued Natchez Trace Collection. She brought several important documents to my attention that I never could have found on my own.

Several people in Vicksburg and Warren County took an interest in my work and helped me to discover their past. Special thanks go to Dee and John Leigh Hyland for being so forthcoming with their family history. Two other local researchers gave me the benefit of their experience. Clinton Bagley guided me through the records in the Adams County Courthouse in Natchez, and Charles L. Sullivan helped me find my way through the massive Claiborne Collection in the

Mississippi Department of Archives and history.

Several people read and commented on earlier versions of some chapters. In particular I want to thank Cheryll Ann Cody of the University of Houston and Jack S. Blocker, Jr., of Huron College, for their comments on an earlier version of Chapter 8, and Anita H. Rutman for her comments of Chapter 1. Edward Ayres of the University of Virginia and Stephen Ashe of Knoxville, Tennessee, provided valuable comments on an earlier version of Chapter 6, when I presented it at a Southern Historical Association session several years ago. I also benefitted from the comments of Ronald P. Formisano, who made a careful reading of Chapter 9. My fellow graduate students at the University of Florida, whose prodding to "just get done" gave me the energy to get done, heard parts of my dissertation when presented orally in classes and colloquia. They always responded enthusiastically--sometimes too enthusiastically. Jeffrey Adler, Marvin Harris, Murdo MacLeod, Darrett B. Rutman, and Bertram Wyatt-Brown read and commented on every chapter.

When I first arrived at the University of Florida Bertram Wyatt-Brown gave me his old typewriter and put me to work. He never let up. Darrett Rutman was just as demanding. If there is something of themselves reflected in my work then I have at least paid a part of the debt I owe for their comments, advice, encouragement and support.

Funding for researching and writing came from the Department of History at the University of Florida. I also spent the better part of a year living and researching in Mississippi with the support of a doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Gordon Cotton, keeper of the oral history of Warren County, gave me a place to stay, showed me around the county, and put me on the path of more fascinating stories than I could find room for in a long manuscript. I am grateful for his friendship and cherish the memories of my days as the scholar-in-residence at Campbell's Swamp.

Final thanks go to my parents, who, if not always sure of what I was doing, exactly, kept all doubts to themselves and gave me all the support in the world. And to Stephanie Cole. Her knowledge, insight, and understanding makes living with my sharpest editor and toughest critic an absolute delight.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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By

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August, 1991

Chairperson: Bertram Wyatt-Brown
Major Department: History

This is a study of the formation of southern society in Warren County, Mississippi. Originally settled in the last quarter of the eighteenth century by pioneer hog drovers from North and South this place resembled more the nation's other western regions, such as Illinois and Ohio, than the older plantation districts of Virginia and the Carolinas. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, however, the region around present-day Vicksburg developed into a slave and cotton plantation society.

Three distinct stages marked Warren County's economic and social development. From the mid-1770s to 1790 homesteaders lived by extensive exploitation of local resources, practiced slash-and-burn agriculture, and participated only minimally in a national or international market. During the last decade of the century some

homesteaders began to raise large herds of cattle for sale in a regional market. After 1810 or so those who had raised cattle began to acquire slaves and plant cotton. Significantly, farmers with small or no cattle herds did not choose to plant cotton until population growth, the disappearance of wildlife, and the rolling back of the forests brought about the demise of the pioneer economy and thus forced them eventually to take up cotton planting.

Changing material conditions and economic development stimulated changes in the character of social relations. Growing reliance on the market drew households out of their neighborhoods and away from each other. Local patterns of cooperation broke down, while struggles for increasingly scarce resources frequently turned violent. Individuals came to depend on extended kin-networks to marshal collective resources, which placed tremendous power in older men with legal control over family property, and provided the basis for southern patriarchy. Changes in material conditions altered relations between men and women, masters and slaves, slaveholders and nonslaveholders.

This study is based on data gleaned from public records and assembled in the form of more than 6,000 cases. Traditional qualitative sources are also used where they offer insight into the perceptions and meanings Warren County residents gave to behavior observable through quantitative analysis.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: THE SOUTHERN COMMUNITY

The messenger found him in his rose garden, or so the story is told. With characteristic stoicism Jefferson Davis accepted the news of his selection as President of the new Confederate States of America. The next morning he bade farewell to family and neighbors, to the people who had kept his home for much of his adult life, and then, nearly missing the steamer to Vicksburg, began a roundabout journey to Montgomery.

It probably did not occur to Davis that he might never live in Warren County again. No doubt more urgent matters occupied his thoughts. But if it did, as he rode upriver he may have surveyed the countryside one last time, forming a mental picture to last through the trying years ahead, a picture of the community that was the South he knew best, the South that he would lead through four years of war. Hurricane plantation, the home of his older brother Joseph, sat just beyond the bank on the right as the "Natchez" paddled upstream. Still probably the finest mansion around, there were now rivals to its magnificence where only a short

while ago had stood crude log dwellings, or else nothing at all. Cotton fields, protected behind a new system of levees that bordered the river, spread out over land that had once been flood plain and cypress swamp.

Past Hurricane and around a sharp bend, Davis next would have spied a plantation that once belonged to former Governor John A. Quitman, whose father-in-law had acquired the land in a series of purchases from several homesteading families from New England. About ten miles beyond the Quitman place sat Warrenton, a village that years ago had been the county seat and center of local trade. Now, most steamboats, including the "Natchez", passed it by. Another ten miles brought the riverboat to the public wharf at Vicksburg. Here the president-elect disembarked and walked along Jackson Street up the steep hill to the courthouse. Built by slaves, with its great columns on four sides, perched high on a hill at the top of a bluff overlooking miles of river and Louisiana lowlands, the Warren County courthouse symbolized, as it does today, the civilization that was the Old South. Yet this was a civilization only recently come to this part of the world. The courthouse itself was so new that the grounds around it had yet to be landscaped. Little more than a generation earlier Davis's brother Samuel had hacked a plantation out of wilderness just a few miles from where the president-elect stood and addressed a crowd gathered to send him off. In Warren County

the Old South was really quite new. It had only just arrived. Very shortly it would vanish, forever. So what was this South? And where did it come from?

Historians remain divided as to the essence of antebellum Southern culture. On the one hand abstractionists claim that to understand the South we must unlock the minds of the people who lived there and view their world subjectively as they did. These scholars typically emphasize ethics, ideologies, meanings, and "Southern values." On the other hand, substantialists locate the roots of Southern culture in objectively identifiable and measurable material conditions such as soil quality, climatic variation, miles of navigable rivers, cotton and corn yields, income, nutritional value of diets, and wealth distribution, which they claim determined behavior. Each group, however, concentrating on only one half of Southern culture, offers an incomplete picture. The challenge is to bridge the gap between the abstractionists and the substantialists, to incorporate Southern life and mind into a single history.

Recent inquiries into the nineteenth century Southern white community, however, display much confusion over the relationship between life and mind. Abstractionists hold firmly to the assumption that behavior is merely an outward reflection of thought, which they see as the essence of culture. They tend to ignore or minimize the evolving material context and the dynamics in which Southerners lived

over the course of three centuries. For their part, substantialists, despite their concern for behavior and material conditions, tend to begin with the same assumption, and too often end by simply fitting their observations into the context of an assumed set of beliefs and values. Both groups, moreover, frequently confuse their own perspective and the perspective of those they study--what anthropologists refer to as emics and etics. The contradictions, distortions, and leaps of logical faith that mar Southern community studies disappear, however, when the causal arrow is reversed to point in the opposite direction, from material conditions to behavior to thought.¹

For historians following in the abstractionist tradition, community implies a feeling of togetherness, shared values, or a common ideology. Frequently, they use the word "community" without any reference to a particular place, for they are primarily interested in the ideas that, so they argue, largely determined behavior. For example, Eugene D. Genovese, who has always been fascinated by the mind of the planter class, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese have recently stated that slaveholders found in religion "a basic sense of community."² Michael O'Brien, the historian of Southern arts and letters, has suggested that the Old South might properly be understood as a collection of "communities of discourse" in which thinkers drew on Romantic notions to

invent a "sociology of community" that could explain in their own minds Southern existence.³ But it is the work of Bertram Wyatt-Brown that has argued most forcefully for the centrality of the community ideal in the Southern consciousness.⁴

Whites, Wyatt-Brown claims, subscribed to a code of honor, a set of ethical rules that prescribed behavior in all aspects of life from courting to combat. The code transcended place, embracing hill folk and nabobs irrespective of disparities in wealthholding or status. Honor transcended time, too, uniting each generation with the generation of the fathers. The collective body served as the keeper of the code, and rarely did individuals disregard community expectations.

Wyatt-Brown offers a grand picture, a masterful exploration of the intricacies of the mental culture of the Old South. Although he ties honor to a particular material condition, associating it more with the rugged, less "civilized" regions of the Old Southwest than with the quite different worlds of Tidewater Virginia and coastal South Carolina--"behind the myths and stereotypes," he reminds us, "was a hard and tragic reality"--it is fair to say that he is more concerned with myths and beliefs.⁵ What remains unexplained by the honor paradigm, and the same can be said of O'Brien's Romanticism, and even of the Genoveses' planter Christianity, is how Southerners "found meaning in honor's

demands" within a changing material and social context.

Wyatt-Brown's own position on the origins of Southern honor, and the conditions that kept it alive, is ambiguous. The primitive ethic, he tells us, "though not unrelated to specific economic and social forms, nevertheless persisted owing to general conditions of hard living."⁶ More recently he has placed greater emphasis on the master-slave relationship peculiar to the Old South.⁷ Yet the concept of honor seems disconnected from local variations within Southern society and in the behavior to which it gave meaning. Did honor, of which the ideal of womanhood was an important element, mean something different to a yeoman farmer whose wife's hard labor contributed significantly to the survival of the household than to a wealthy planter who relegated his wife to a more ornamental role? Were young and more fluid communities full of newly arrived strangers more or less honor bound than they would be a generation or so later when status and pecking order had been firmly established? Did honor mean the same thing to slaveholders and nonslaveholders even as disparities in wealthholding and status increased? That the code was central to Southern culture Wyatt-Brown has made abundantly clear, but what function(s) it actually fulfilled cannot be fully understood until honor as an ideological ordering of events can be more precisely grounded in the changing material and social structures of community life.

Substantialist historians have been equally unsuccessful at connecting Southern thinking to underlying material reality, particularly when they attempt to uncover only the conditions and social structures that reflect their preconceptions of beliefs and values. Typically, by community they mean a small place distinguishable as a cluster of households, perhaps set off by a unique set of natural boundaries or endowments, or more commonly, by manmade boundaries--a county, for example. Place, for the substantialists, serves as a laboratory for observing patterns of behavior as they appear in local and generally public records. Less concerned with the way people thought, they feel no pressure to expand the boundaries of their community so that they might consider a variety of more literary or qualitative source materials.

Not all substantialists presume that behavior merely reflects ideas. Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman's study of colonial Middlesex County, Virginia, for example, refrains from commenting at length on ideas and offers instead detailed analyses of behavior within a particular material context. The thoughts and expectations men and women took with them to Middlesex, and the process by which experience in that place in time altered their ideals lie beyond the scope of the Rutmans' analytical framework, which is designed primarily to account for behavioral, not mental, change. This is largely a consequence of the absence of

source material in which colonial Virginians might be heard to speak for themselves. (It also accounts for why historians of the colonial period and of slavery have produced much of the best substantialist work over the last twenty years. Presented with a dearth of qualitative sources, relative to those available for the study of nineteenth century whites, they have concentrated more intensively on behavior.) When they do attempt to offer mental interpretations of behavior, the Rutmans carefully distinguish themselves as "visitors" with informed but active imaginations, so as not to confuse their voice with those of their subjects.⁸ Similarly, Randolph B. Campbell's precise definitions of the social and wealthholding strata of mid-nineteenth century Harrison County, Texas, are his, not those of his subjects.⁹ But while the positivistic approach of scholars such as the Rutmans and Campbell provides necessary groundwork for continued study of Southern culture, the other side--the world as understood by people who lived in that lost civilization--remains nebulous and disconnected from material conditions.

A recent resurgence of Southern intellectual history, brought on by a more general interest in popular culture and mentalite has awakened some scholars in the substantialist camp to the significance of the mental side of culture.¹⁰ But without discrediting their intent to link life and mind, still it must be said that results, to date, have been

disappointing. Orville Vernon Burton's study of Edgefield District, South Carolina, offers perhaps the most thorough description of the social-structural organization of a late antebellum Southern community. Nevertheless, he argues that what really tied this society together was "a common commitment to the preservation of 'Southern values.'"¹¹ Yet apart from some vague references to the experience of life on the land and patriarchal families, Burton never actually describes them. He simply assumes that Edgefield whites, rich and poor, all cherished the same ideals. This presupposition hinders his efforts to explore community life.

There is very little sense of change in Burton's Edgefield. Despite rising tenancy, declining opportunity for upward mobility, the growing dependence of yeomen upon wages earned in mills or on farms owned by elites, an increasing number of female-headed households among poor, Burton contends, like the abstractionists, that all elements of society held fast to the same persistent values. Yet his book offers evidence that, to the contrary, Edgefieldians were not always of one mind. For example, married couples from society's lower orders evaded legal proscriptions against divorce by separating and living in adultery, or relocating under an alias and remarrying. Elite observers, perceiving such behavior somewhat differently, remarked on the low morals of the poor.¹²

Robert Kenzer's Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community also looks for the material and social structures that underlay Southern society, which he locates in the kin networks of Orange County, North Carolina. Geographical isolation restricted human interaction, particularly marriage, to local neighborhood settlements. The mesh of kinship ties that evolved severely limited the development of class consciousness and conflict. "People of average or even no means could perceive wealthy planters in familial rather than class terms, because they often possessed common ancestors."¹³ Echoing Burton, Kenzer's main point, that a crosshatching of social structures kept Southern society from cracking along any particular line, is sensible and easily substantiated.¹⁴ Relations between a planter and a nonslaveholder were surely different where they were joined by blood or marriage. Moreover, correlation of family and neighborhood strengthened attachment to place, which in turn shaped electoral politics, as well as the community's reaction to war and secession, as Kenzer shows. There are problems with his analysis, however.

Kenzer, too, might justifiably be labelled an abstractionist. He assumes that all Southerners understood family in a particular way, that they perceived kinship ties as something special, as symbolic of common interests. The absence of conflict is never demonstrated. Kenzer merely presumes it from the existence of kin-neighborhoods.

Moreover, he never explores the relationship between class and kinship. Perhaps, as he claims, clan won over class, but at what cost to family? This dichotomy is too simplistic. Evidence of family violence presented by scholars such as Wyatt-Brown strongly suggests that Kenzer quit his research and analysis too early, and that kinship is an insufficient explanation for peacefulness.

The superficiality of Kenzer's analysis becomes even more apparent in light of Altina Waller's superb study of the Hatfield and McCoy feud. Significantly, family proves not to be an indicator of how individuals lined up during the conflict. Economics, not genealogy, determined who supported which side. In Logan and Pike Counties, kinship was a social arrangement based as much or more on loyalty networks of friends, co-workers, and other unrelated associates as on blood and conjugal connections. Moreover, just as in Kenzer's Orange County, the density of kin-networks increased with time, eventually reaching a point where virtually everyone in the Tug River Valley was related somehow. In this context it became meaningless to distinguish family from non-family members; kinship provided no useful means for organizing a community. "Family units in the Tug community," writes Waller, "were based partially, if not primarily, on existing social reality rather than on 'blood.'" And that social reality changed constantly.¹⁵

Both Kenzer and Burton offer us much needed descriptions of life at the local level. But they mistakenly undertake their investigations in order to find the social structural basis of some vague notion of Southern beliefs and values. Had they both set out to observe social relations without regard to perceptions, their descriptions would have been fuller, positioning them on solid ground from which to comment on attitudes.

This is precisely what Frederick Siegel sets out to accomplish in his study of Pittsylvania County and the town of Danville, Virginia. Maintaining that the "primal source of Southern distinctiveness" lay in "the material conditions of production, soil, climate, and the technical peculiarities of the staple being produced," he attempts to demonstrate how the leaders of Pittsylvania society, planter-entrepreneurs he calls them, were, in life and mind, as enterprising as any Yankee. From the beginning they dreamed that Danville, strategically located on the road from Washington to Augusta near the falls on the Dan River, would grow to become a great commercial and manufacturing center. However, physical and material constraints, Siegel tells us, meant that Danville's economic development, such as it was, remained bound to tobacco production and manufacturing, despite the planter-entrepreneurs' booster ethos.¹⁶

Siegel stands on firm ground when he argues that material conditions, not to mention markets, kept Pittsylvania on tobacco road, so to speak. A planter with the strongest of entrepreneurial attitudes could never will such conditions out of existence. Moreover, he brings a refreshing behavioral approach to the question of a distinctive Southern culture. Historians who argue that a peculiar set of attitudes separated North from South will be troubled with this book, for however Pittsylvania's planter-entrepreneurs perceived themselves, they certainly acted no differently from Yankee businessmen.¹⁷ Nevertheless, something is amiss in his picture of this Southside Virginia county. Siegel portrays Pittsylvania planters as frustrated Yankees consigned to a life of beating their heads against a wall. Why did the planter-entrepreneurs keep up their efforts to transform the local economy if their chances for success were so hopeless? Why did they not move elsewhere, to some place more promising? The problem is that while Siegel argues convincingly that values and attitudes did not substantially alter material conditions, he fails to grant that conditions did indeed shape ideas. Thus, in his analysis, the minds of the planter-entrepreneurs, as he describes them, seem out of place with the reality of life in Pittsylvania County. But ideas and material conditions were connected. Therefore, persistent entrepreneurial activity would seem to indicate not hard luck, as Siegel

would have it, but opportunity for those in a position to grasp it. Indeed, as Siegel sometimes seems to imply, the variety of possibilities available to enterprising Virginians made that state at times seem quite un-Southern.¹⁸

Only a few planters and businessmen had enough capital to risk venturing in enterprises other than tobacco, and so only they could have developed anything like a Yankee ethic. Indeed, one of the "distinctive" traits of the Old South may well have been that opportunity presented itself to only a few. Despite the promise of the book's subtitle, there is little discussion of Danville and Pittsylvania society. Siegel is concerned with only a handful of the wealthiest planter-entrepreneurs, who upon close inspection appear to have been more bankers, merchants, manufacturers, physicians, and artisans than planters. The rest of the community he ignores: poor people numerous enough to require an overseer, local mechanics worried about competition from manufactures flooding into Danville along transportation routes improved by the efforts of the planter-entrepreneurs, and rural residents in the north end of the county along the Roanoke River who lacked an interest in the schemes of urban boosters to improve the Dan River.¹⁹

Neither the abstractionists nor the substantialists take us very far toward linking the Southern mind with the realities of life below the Mason and Dixon Line. Certain of

the former like to pretend that such a connection never actually existed. "The greatest enemy of the endeavor of Southern intellectual history," writes Michael O'Brien, "is the premise of social organicism."²⁰ The latter, for their part, follow one of three strategies. Some concentrate only on observable behavior, thus by default and quite unintentionally agreeing with the abstractionists that there was no important connection between life and mind. Others, searching for the vital link, abruptly end their investigations when they seem to confirm the values they only assume Southerners held dearly. A third group ignores contradictions that arise between their descriptions of society and attitudes, thus never making the necessary juncture.

"It is not fruitful," writes Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "to attempt to ascribe direct causation either to culture [i.e. the mind] or to material life in any given situation, primarily because the two are inextricable intertwined." She suggests that researchers concentrate their efforts at the point where the mental and the material come together--social relations.²¹ This is precisely the tactic taken in the recent work of Lacy Ford, Steven Hahn, and J. William Harris. Their studies represent the most determined efforts to build a bridge between the abstractionist and substantialist positions, by beginning between them. Placing ideas and material context in dialectical opposition, they

argue that each shaped the other through intermediating social structures, particularly, though by no means exclusively, class. Thus they see community as both place and idea. These eclectic materialists, like the abstractionists, explore attitudes and values, although they generally prefer republicanism as a catch-all label for the ideology they describe, no doubt reflecting their overt interest in politics. Nevertheless, there are interesting similarities between republicanism, honor, Romanticism, and planter Christianity, particularly as all are described as traditional or pre-modern belief systems that emphasized localism and the power of the community to restrain individual aspirations.²² In any case, this group of scholars differs from Wyatt-Brown, and even more from O'Brien, less in the attitudes they describe than in their efforts to relate ideals to local level material and social structures. Furthermore, like the abstractionists, the eclectic materialists find single counties or towns too constraining for their foray into ideologies. Yet, like the substantialists, their concern for material context and social organization requires that they maintain a reference to place, although they usually settle for a larger region--the upcountry, or a hinterland of several counties. The efforts of the eclectic materialists, however, are marred by epistemological confusion: They offer no systematic way of determining when Southern social structures, and individual

behavior, mirrored abstract attitudes and when they reflected substantial conditions. Moreover, like the abstractionists, they reject the notion that an important difference exists between the perspective of the observer and that of the subject. According to Eugene D. Genovese, "once an ideology arises it alters profoundly the material reality and in fact becomes a partially autonomous feature of the reality."²³ But whose reality? Certainly from the perspective of the historian there is no such change. Indeed, reality as perceived by someone who lived in the distant past, while very much a part of that past (a point often ignored by substantialists), is distinct from the reality of that long ago time as understood by a present day historian. As a way of clarifying this distinction, it should be pointed out that some of those who fall here under the label of eclectic materialist consider themselves Marxist historians, while others do not. The Marxists see class conflict, while the non-Marxists stress class consensus. But in both their approaches, the real historical motor is often the dialectic between the mental and the material. In short, however they perceive things, from the perspective of an onlooker the non-Marxists and their more "radical" colleagues sound very much alike.

In his book on Augusta, Georgia's, hinterlands, Harris promises to explore Southern values through "an intensive investigation of a local area," (an area that consists of

the countryside around Augusta, although curiously excludes the town itself) "and through an examination of how slaves, masters, and nonslaveholding whites interacted in their daily lives." Yet, this is not in fact what he actually does. "Human interactions," Harris states, "must be interpreted in terms of what people themselves think they are doing." So it is not social interaction that he intends to explore after all, but perceptions of interaction, which he claims are more important. From this position Harris is able to acknowledge the material "portents of class division," such as disparities in wealth and opportunities between rich and poor, and yet conclude that the South on the eve of secession was (ideologically) united in "a single white community, whose geographic and symbolic center was the courthouse."²⁴

Harris ambitiously seeks the connections between republicanism and community life around Augusta. The presupposition with which he began, however, is open to question. As Harris would have it, a shared commitment to republican ideology, by which he means an agrarian economy enjoyed by free and independent white producers and guaranteed by the labor of dependent black slaves, provided the foundation for social unity. Buttressing this ideology--and here Harris points the causal arrow from the material to the mental world--was "a potential for social mobility, and a web of personal relationships between classes." How

much mobility there actually was Harris does not say. Indeed, in his framework it does not matter how many yeomen actually acquired slaves. What matters is that they perceived their chances as good enough to warrant their continued support of slavery. This we know they did because, as Harris turns the arrow in the opposite direction, they shared the planters' republican ideology.²⁵

By concentrating on perception, Harris loses sight of the changing social structures that underlay the Augusta hinterland. He correctly understands that society and ideology were connected, but he never really looks for society. Instead, he assumes its character from his understanding of republicanism. Perception, he tells us, is paramount. But he is forever mixing up his views with those of the people he studies. This leads to all kinds of confusion over the very nature of the society he describes, over what people actually did. Consider for example his discussion of the role of churches and religion in the community. Church members, planters and yeomen alike, "prayed together, gave comfort in times of sorrow and distress, and shared the joy of each converted sinner," and thus acquired "a sense of community." But while "each congregation was a real community," nevertheless, "churches were not perfect communities." Indeed, "some congregations were hardly communities at all," no doubt because "many

whites, perhaps the majority, did not even belong to a congregation."²⁶

The studies of upcountry republicanism by Steven Hahn and Lacy Ford are more successful than Harris's. Ford, for example, demonstrates how upcountry South Carolinians fashioned a republicanism that taught them to "leverage their involvement in market agriculture by maintaining a sufficiency in subsistence production" as a safeguard against very real risks. The extent of market activity at a given moment, and the pace of economic development, therefore, differed from place to place, not according to ideology or values, but according to the relative material advantages of certain locales over others when it came to growing and shipping a staple crop. Hahn, too, links the anti-market, communally oriented, petty-producer ideology of upcountry Georgia yeomen to the local exchange economy that resulted from the region's poor soil, hilly terrain, and relative isolation.²⁷

Ford and Hahn, however, beg the question when they describe tremendous changes in material and social circumstances, and at the same time maintain that ideology persisted. Ford, for example, seems to lose sight of how an inclination for safety-first agriculture arose initially as a practical response to material conditions and how, as conditions changed, the original meaning of such inclinations would have disappeared.²⁸ Belief and reality,

in their interpretations, began at the same starting point, but only reality moved. Conflict--secession for Ford, Populism for Hahn--erupted when the growing disjuncture between life and mind reached a point of crisis.²⁹ This only makes sense, however, for those who experienced a decline in quality of living as a result of tangible change. For them, traditional ideals of the way life ought to be, of how it used to be in the good old days, as it were, remained relevant. But the source of their frustration and anger lay not simply in their heads. It rested in the deterioration of their lifestyle, a very real problem that gnawed away at them day after day. Ideology thus became an important motivator for action: It was never the source of the dilemma. Likewise, those to whom social and economic change brought a more comfortable and secure way of life found no use for outmoded ideals, and very quickly invented new ones.

Political conflict, whether expressed in two-party competition, secession, or a third party revolt, arose not from some discrepancy between reality and ideology. Beneath it, as James Oakes has suggested, lay two (or more?) co-existing realities, each with its own ideology. Oakes argues that in the years before the Civil War ideological change accompanied economic transformation, resulting in the emergence of a distinctly Southern liberalism that "envisioned a world of competitive individualism rather than

community-oriented interdependency." Two-party political conflict, he claims, resulted when change bypassed some Southerners, leaving them to live and think in more traditional ways, while it transformed the lives of others completely. The formation of political ideologies during the Age of Jackson is explored in some detail by Harry L. Watson. Within the tiny space of one North Carolina county, according to Watson, a transportation and economic revolution presented local residents, individually and to varying degrees, with new opportunities and decisions, which perceptive politicians recognized and expressed in speeches and party platforms. Similarly, William Barney's notion of a modernization crisis precipitated by the intensification of slave plantation agriculture begins with the sound presupposition that "evolving forms of family and community life, stages of economic development, and white value structures" were all interconnected. Moreover, like Oakes, Barney emphasizes "the uneven pace of social change and ideological response."³⁰

A recent study of the Tennessee mountain community of Cades Cove shows how material change sometimes varied widely within places many times smaller than the Georgia and South Carolina Upcountry, or Augusta's hinterlands. In the years following the Civil War, an increasing scarcity of land plus low prices affected individual families differentially, altering the values of some, and resulting in community

division and conflict. Families on rocky hillsides had always supplemented their income by making and selling moonshine. When Tennessee outlawed the manufacture of whiskey in 1878, these families kept on producing what by then had become the source of their livelihood. They found themselves segregated from the rest of their community, legally and morally. Law-abiding, "decent" farmers grappled with the decision of whether or not to betray neighbors and even kin to the authorities, risking reprisal from moonshiners who sometimes put a torch to the barns of their former friends.³¹

The eclectic materialists have to be commended for attempting to link the material and mental worlds of the nineteenth century South. But their underlying premise, that causation cannot be attributed to either the mind or material conditions because both are equally real and powerful determinants of human behavior is, in a word, wrong. Inevitably, such a proposition invites confusion, as scholars arbitrarily assign causation first to one, then to the other, and then back to the former, and so forth. Moreover, any hope of recovering the past as it probably was becomes hopelessly lost if we insist on granting the historian such needless opportunities to interject his or her subjectivity. Worse still, it suggests that the abstractionists have been right all along, that to unlock the past we must somehow unlock the minds of the people who

lived in that distant time, which is to presume that those people correctly understood the ways of their world. Such a proposition leads logically to the conclusion that the past can only be lost with time, a curious position for historians to take. Perhaps we should drop all our current projects and begin to write about the present, thus saving future colleagues the trouble!

The bridge between community as lived and as perceived must proceed from the substantialist side of the gorge, and in a local context. If we think of the community as a social form arising from what Marvin Harris calls "the encounter between womb and belly and earth and water," then community necessarily becomes a primary unit of biological and cultural reproduction and transmission. Therefore, anyone interested in understanding a culture--the South's for instance--will find the little community a worthwhile place to start. Any "fashionable" discontent with local studies would surely be premature at this point, and may never be appropriate. Moreover, complaints generally levelled at community studies usually confuse problems in execution with the approach in general.³²

The essence of community consists of the human interrelationships formed so that individuals might produce and reproduce.³³ Tracking their patterns should be the first objective of the local study. These patterns vary with material context. Sex ratio, population density, ease of

transportation, terrain, climate, and mode of production all shape the ways in which men and women come together to work and procreate. Nineteenth century Americans, by clearing forests, building roads, killing off wildlife, exhausting the soil, or causing erosion altered their material environment in ways that forced them to continually readjust their patterns of association so that they could continue to meet their primary objectives with an ease they had come to expect. The Southern community, therefore, was dynamic. Moreover, the relationship between the individual and material context differed for each person. Even in a perfectly egalitarian society where everyone has equal access to all resources, differences would arise through variations in physical and mental capacities brought by each person to his or her world. Politics, power, relative advantage and disadvantage, then, characterized and shaped interaction. Politics, too, were dynamic.³⁴

Interpersonal relationships can be observed, as can the material conditions that are their context. But how are we to understand community, or the South, as perceived and expressed in ideologies? Reading the minds of dead people is not easy, and is certainly more difficult than observing how they behaved. This is not to suggest that we abandon all efforts to explore values and beliefs; far from it. But if, as Steven Stowe has properly argued, we need to understand how Southerners "made sense of" their world then we must

first know how and why they lived as they did. Instead, recent scholars, Stowe among them, demonstrate a disconcerting willingness to abstract beliefs from their material and institutional world. Rather than unite social and intellectual history, they tend to minimize life outside the mind. This tendency may explain the static quality of their analyses. The failure to ground attitudes in a changing material and social context strips them of any dynamic energy. Furthermore, observed behavior serves as a check on subjectivity of the historian who would read any and all meanings into the written record. Stowe, for example, noting the absence of regular discussion of household slaves in planter family correspondence, concludes that while masters and certain slaves may have lived in close proximity, they were in no way intimate. The distinction he makes between the planter's mind--"intimacy"--and the historian's observation of behavior--"proximity"--is necessary. But he draws his conclusion from a reading of letters, and without regard for behavior. But how can Stowe possibly know what planters who did not write about their slaves felt about them. "Meaningful historical discussion of a group's ideology," he insists, "must follow from the words of the people themselves." Fair enough. But what are we to make of their silences. In this instance Stowe practices historical mind reading of the worst sort, a lapse that could have been checked with closer attention paid to

observable behavior. His conclusion, of course, may well be correct. But one could just as easily conclude the exact opposite, and have the additional support of extensive behavioral evidence of close interpersonal relations, including miscegenation. More likely, intimacy between master and slave was too hot a subject to risk committing to the written record. Eugene D. Genovese is surely correct, that the slaveholders and the slaves forged their history together.³⁵

Those who would insist on reading ideologies as "maps" of social reality might want to pay more attention to the actual road.³⁶ An ideology such as republicanism that champions communalism over individualism must mean something different in a context of social fragmentation and discord than in one of close-knit interdependence and harmony. In the former it may function to keep society from changing too quickly, while in the latter it may simply reflect an existing and stable social reality. In both instances, ideology on its own explains nothing; is instead something that needs to be explained. Read simply as a map it could not tell us in which of these two societies we were travelling.

The "new" intellectual history, like the old, risks reclaiming history for the privileged few. The letter writing circles that have attracted much recent attention, and which are many times smaller than the most minute places

studied, form the basis of conclusions blanketing the whole South, or at least the whole planter class, yet without any critical discourse on the representativeness of the sample. But a marriage between the history of society and the history of beliefs and ideologies might help compensate for the drawbacks and limitations of both approaches. However, like any enlightened marriage suitable for the late 1980s, neither partner should presume to represent the other. Investigating past thought and behavior are different enterprises. If the two are joined, as they probably should be, the emic and etic distinction must not be forgotten.

The material context of a given place elicited from each individual numerous behavioral responses, such as observable patterns of human interaction (community), that constantly altered conditions, all of which were mentally catalogued so that they could feed back into the model in the form of ideas of practical and impractical behavior. Conditions and requisite behavior filtered pre-existing ideas carried into a locale. Useless notions fell by the wayside, brand new ones emerged to correspond with action, while others underwent some degree of alteration, often fulfilling a new function even while appearing, deceptively, to keep their original form. Thus armed with a dynamic model of community development, one that maintains a distinction between life and mind even while connecting them, we can

begin to outline the evolution of Southern society and culture at the local level.³⁷

While the process of community formation and evolution is universal, the ingredients in this equation, and so the outcome, can vary considerably over time and place. This study looks at the material and social ingredients that went into the making of one community, Jefferson Davis's Warren County, Mississippi, the northern-most of the five old river counties located in the states southwestern corner. In its early years the settlements in what became Warren County resembled in many ways nascent farm neighborhoods in the Northwest, with their small family households grouped along rivers and streams where they practiced a diversified, semi-subsistence agriculture.³⁸ In time a regional market for beef, later the world market for cotton, presented some but significantly not all of these households with opportunities to take advantage of their unique soil, climate, and river system. It also encouraged slavery, which had been an institution of minor importance to the first settlers. Those who, because they owned or could afford to purchase slaves, were able to take advantage of market opportunities soon reaped great profits. Others languished. The result was stratification and class formation.³⁹

In Warren County, the struggle to live what individuals defined as a comfortable life created the dynamic that changed the way everyone lived and understood the world.

Consider, for example, the relationship between rural households and the market. All farmers produced something for sale, if only to raise cash to pay the inevitable taxes. More, even the county's most isolated homesteaders exchanged on the world market for commodities such as sugar, salt, coffee, gunpowder, and hardware, the few simple items that made life more than barely endurable. In keeping to a minimum treks over long distances of turbulent water and rugged road, the first homesteaders did not display some traditional anti-market ethos so much as common sense and even a basic desire to stay alive. Similarly, when these same farmers sought to improve roads and waterways, provided they could afford tax increases, they did not act according to the dictates of a new market mentality, but rather, they followed the same old desire for security and comfort. Bad roads and impassible water hazards simply made life difficult. Improvements, because they made the market more accessible, served as an inducement for greater production for exchange, and the once isolated, largely subsistence oriented household one day found itself devoting most of its energy to raising a staple, buying much of what it formerly produced, and even purchasing a growing number of consumer goods. Mind-set changed, too, corresponding to alterations in the way farm households existed. In particular, a patriarchal ideal emerged as a way of understanding a society that placed property-holding men on top, slaves on

bottom, and women, non-propertyholders, and other dependents somewhere in between.

As the local agricultural economy grew, villages, then towns appeared. One, Vicksburg, grew to be quite large, about eight thousand inhabitants at the start of the Civil War. The South, contrary to legend, did not lack urban places. Conceived originally as entrepôts for small rural hinterlands and as seats of justice, they became as well places where rural society paraded itself. In Vicksburg a planter could ride his fine carriage--a symbol of wealth and status powerful for its uselessness in a still untamed countryside--to the court where he presided, while nonslaveholding farmers sold vegetables and meat to townspeople. Always dependent economically on agricultural trade, Vicksburg did not have to grow very large before a substantial number of its residents no longer had any direct contact with plantation and farm society. Saloon and hotel keepers, railroad and river boat workers and passengers they catered to, transient laborers, gamblers--all imparted to the town a certain life of its own. The community as a whole, in its patterns of interaction, and as ordered or understood through notions of patriarchy, republicanism, or honor, bore little resemblance to its earlier self, and even less to rural communities and towns in the North. Warren County had become a southern place.

In other places, as the studies discussed above make clear, a Southern community's process of development could be arrested at any point in time, or even reversed.⁴⁰ Poor soil, not to mention mountains, would make any farmer reluctant to rely on a distant market for his livelihood. At any point in the nineteenth century, then, the South as a whole consisted of thousands of little communities all located somewhere along a moving plane of development. Warren County, however, located on some of the richest soil in the country, followed the course of development from pioneer outpost to prosperous cotton plantation society, and did so quickly.

Jefferson Davis's train carried him eastward from Vicksburg, through the central regions of Warren County, past plantations and small farms and villages, toward the revolution that would change this community forever. How ironic that this place's origins lay in an earlier revolution.

Notes

1. Marvin Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture (New York: Crowell, 1968), 568-604; and Harris, Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture (New York: Vintage, 1980), 31-45.
2. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "The Religious Ideals of Southern Slave Society," in The Evolution of Southern Culture, Numan V. Bartley, ed. (Athens, Georgia, and London: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 22.

3. Michael O'Brien, "The Lineaments of Antebellum Southern Romanticism," Journal of American Studies 20 (August, 1986): 165-88.

4. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Equally important as community, according to Wyatt-Brown, was the experience of family, but in his analysis of southern culture, family and community were inseparable.

5. Wyatt-Brown expresses most pointedly his objections to recent attempts to delineate a southern mind apart from southern life in: "The Real and Mythical Souths," The Southern Review 24 (Winter, 1988): 229-235, quote from p.231.

6. Quotes are from Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, pp. xv, 506.

7. Having first removed slavery from the center of southern concern in Southern Honor, Wyatt-Brown returned it in the abridged version of his book: "Without slavery to sustain the appropriate environment, Southern honor would have died early." Quoted from Wyatt-Brown, Honor and Violence in the Old South, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), ix. See also, Wyatt-Brown, "The Mask of Obedience: Male Slave Psychology in the Old South," American Historical Review 93 (December 1988): 1228-52.

8. Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia 1650-1750 2 vols. (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1984). Despite the lack of concern for the mental side of culture in their study of Middlesex County, the Rutman's were among the first "new" social historians to attempt a union with intellectual history. See, for example, Darrett B. Rutman's insightful American Puritanism: Faith and Practice (Philadelphia, New York, and Toronto: Lippincott, 1970). Darrett Rutman's disappointment with the progress of the endeavor he helped start is apparent in "New England as Idea and Society Revisited," William and Mary Quarterly 3d ser., 41 (January 1984), 56-61.

9. Randolph B. Campbell, A Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas, 1850-1880 (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983).

10. On recent trends in southern intellectual history see: Drew Gilpin Faust, "The Peculiar South Revisited: White Society, Culture, and Politics in the Antebellum Period, 1800-1860," in Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W.

Higginbotham, John B. Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen, eds. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 98-107.

11. Orville Vernon Burton, In My Father's House are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 3.

12. Burton, In My Father's House, pp. 67-76, 136-40.

13. Robert C. Kenzer, Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 2.

14. James Oakes, "From Republicanism to Liberalism: Ideological Change and the Crisis of the Old South," American Quarterly 37 (Fall 1985): 551-71, discusses the growing importance toward the end of the antebellum period of a plurality of interests: cities, planters, merchants, government, corporations, rich, propertyless, to name a few.

The intricacies of multi-stranded layers of personal relationships within a small place is abundantly clear in Rutman and Rutman, A Place in Time, 1:94-127. John T. Schlotterbeck also emphasizes the "intricate web of social ties linking all segments of the social structure," and the "intermeshing of reciprocal economic needs with loyalties of family, friendship, and religion." See John Thomas Schlotterbeck, "Plantation and Farm: Social and Economic Change in Orange and Greene Counties, Virginia, 1716 to 1860," Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1980, p.212, and "The 'Social Economy' of an Upper South Community: Orange and Greene Counties, Virginia, 1815-1860," in Class, Conflict, and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies, Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, eds., p. 18, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982).

15. Altina L. Waller, Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900 (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 77-85, quotation from p. 84.

16. Frederick F. Siegel, The Roots of Southern Distinctiveness: Tobacco and Society in Danville, Virginia, 1780-1865 (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 3, 4, 135.

17. In a review of the Pittsylvania study, Steven Stowe, one of the best and brightest "new" intellectual historians of the South, criticizes Siegel for paying too little attention to what people said and thought. Siegel, according to Stowe,

"too often infers ideology from behavior." Stowe's comment is a good one. However, by the same token, one should not infer behavior from ideology. More importantly, as Siegel's study clearly demonstrates, time and energy spent on discovering what planters thought they were doing is greatly wasted if we do not know what they actually did. Steven M. Stowe, "Prisoners of the Leaf," Reviews in American History (December 1988): 579-84, quotation from p. 582.

18. David R. Goldfield, Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism, 1847-1861 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977) discusses the similarities between urbanization and boosterism in Virginia and the North. On the political estrangement between Upper and Lower South during the 1850s, see Daniel W. Crofts, Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

19. Siegel, Roots of Southern Distinctiveness, pp. 42, 53, 110, 112-114, 121.

20. Michael O'Brien, "The Endeavor of Southern Intellectual History," The Southern Review 24 (Winter 1988): 66.

21. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Communities of Discourse, Relations of Power: Thoughts on Culture and Society," in "Does Culture Matter? An Exchange," Daniel Scott Smith, ed. Historical Methods 21 (Fall 1988): 172.

22. Wyatt-Brown discusses the parallels between religion and honor in: "God and Honor in the Old South," Southern Review 25 (April 1989), 283-96.

23. Eugene D. Genovese, In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History (New York: Pantheon, 1968; reprint ed., Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 32.

24. J. William Harris, Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 4, 64-93, 119.

25. Harris, Plain Folk, pp. 5-7.

26. Harris Plain Folk, pp. 101, 103.

27. Lacy K. Ford, Jr. Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), quotation from p. 56. Steven Hahn, The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the

Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

28. On the practicality of safety-first agriculture, see Gavin Wright, Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 62-74.

29. Both Hahn and Ford portray secession as an ideological reaction to change, much as does J. Mills Thornton, Politics and Power in a Slave Society, Alabama, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978). Hahn and Thornton, by emphasizing the trauma commercialization wrought on upcountry communities, provide grounds for interpreting secession as a reaction to the spread of the market. Ford, however, precedes his analysis of secession with a perceptive discussion of the "boom" of the 1850s that makes his last chapter seem out of place.

30. James Oakes, "From Republicanism to Liberalism," p. 569; William L. Barney, "Patterns of Crisis: Alabama White Families and Social Change, 1850-1870," Sociology and Social Research 63 (1978-1978): 524-43, quotation from pp. 524, 525; Harry L. Watson, Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); Barney, "Towards the Civil War: The Dynamics of Change in a Black Belt County," in Class, Conflict, and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies, Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, eds., (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1982), 146-72; Barney, "The Ambivalence of Change: From Old South to New in the Alabama Black Belt, 1850-1870," in From Old South to New: Essays on the Transitional South, Walter J. Fraser, Jr., and Winfred B. Moore, eds., (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1981), 33-41.

Harry L. Watson, "Conflict and Collaboration: Yeomen, Slaveholders, and Politics in the Antebellum South," Social History 10 (October 1985): 273-98, draws on a large body of recent work on the upcountry, and in the end concludes, much like the dialectical materialists, that culture was embedded in "the social structure of the rural community." But he also denies the relevance of some "disembodied sense of tradition nor an autonomous ethnic heritage." (281)

David Freeman Weiman, in the substantialist mold, explores the material forces of change in the Georgia upcountry, although his analysis is incomplete for its failure to connect economic transformation to politics and ideological transformation. Weiman, "Petty Commodity Production in the Cotton South: Upcountry Farmers in the Georgia Cotton Economy, 1840-1880" Ph.D. dissertation,

Stanford University, 1984; "The Economic Emancipation of the Non-Slaveholding Class: Upcountry Farmers in the Georgia Economy," Journal of Economic History 45 (1985): 71-94; "Farmers and the Market in Antebellum America: A View from the Georgia Up-Country," Journal of Economic History 47 (1987): 627-48.

31. Durwood Dunn, Cades Cove: The Life and Death of A Southern Appalachian Community (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 195-98, 232-40.

32. Marvin Harris, Cultural Materialism, p. ix.

Curiously, Jane Censer, "Planters and the Southern Community," detects a "fashionable" discontent with the examination of small places. Yet southern historians are only beginning to comprehend how such studies can contribute to an understanding of the whole section, as Censer's own article demonstrates.

For the usual stock complaints levelled at the community study approach, see Lacy K. Ford, Jr., "Ties that Bind?," Reviews in American History, 17 (March 1989), 65. Ford summarizes the complaints of Gavin Wright, "Rethinking the Postbellum Southern Political Economy: A Review Essay," Business History Review 58 (Autumn 1984), 409-16.

33. My definition of community is based on: Conrad M. Arensburg and Solon T. Kimball, Culture and Community (New York, Chicago, and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 7-27, and Colin Bell and Howard Newby, Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1972), 19.

The most thoughtful, and thought provoking forays into community in the American past have come from Darrett B. Rutman: "The Social Web: A Prospectus for the Study of the Early American Community," in Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History, William L. O'Neill, ed., pp. 57-89, (Minneapolis, 1973); "Community Study," Historical Methods, 13 (1980): 29-41; and A Place In Time. Rutman offers an etic and substantialist perspective of community as observed behavior. An emic and abstractionist view of community as a mental image or reflection of experience is provided by Thomas Bender, Community and Social Change in America (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978).

34. Two who have decried the "new social history," quite correctly, for its tendency to avoid discussion of the politics of human interaction are Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism (New York and Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1983), 179-212. Politics and power, formal and informal,

exist to some degree in all human interaction, and thus are at the heart of community.

35. Steven M. Stowe, Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), xiii, xvii; "Prisoners of the Leaf," p.582. Craig Simpson, "The Old South and the New History," Canadian Review of American Studies (forthcoming) offers an excellent and skeptical assessment of Stowe's views. Russell Lindley Blake, after his investigation into the values of the masters', does indeed conclude just the opposite, that some of their closest, most intimate personal ties were with their slaves: "Ties of Intimacy: Social Values and Personal Relationships of Antebellum Slaveholders," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1978.

Thomas Jefferson and his slave Sally Hemmings were no less intimate by her absence in his correspondence. See Fawn M. Brodie, Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974). On the extent of miscegenation, estimated by using as a proxy the number of mulattoes recorded by the census, see Richard H. Steckel, "Miscegenation and the American Slave Schedules," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 11 (1980): 251-63. Mulattoes, as a percentage of the total slave population, jumped from 7.7% in 1850 to over 10% by 1860. In certain rural places the figure reached close to 20%, and was even greater in large urban areas. Genovese expresses his views at length in his masterful Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage, 1974).

36. Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 216, 220, describes ideologies as "maps," "blueprints," and "templates."

37. This model is an elaboration on the stimulus-organism-response model used frequently by social scientists. The model's use of mental "feedback" is based on Marvin Harris's model of the socio-cultural system. See Harris, Cultural Materialism, pp. 70-75. On tracking observable patterns of human interaction, see Rutman, "Community Study."

38. Three quarters of the families that settled Sugar Creek, in Illinois, came from the southern states of Kentucky, Virginia, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Doubtless some moved north to escape slavery, as John Mack Faragher points out. Most of those who gave slavery as their reason for leaving the South did so in memoirs written after the rise of abolitionism. I suspect most of these southern men and women moved to Illinois for the same reason people moved west generally: land. In any case, there was little during the first phase of that community's development to suggest

that it would grow into something different from the southern communities left behind. See John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp.45-49.

39. Small places developed according to their own material conditions within the context of a world economy. On the world context, see: Andre Gunder Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1967), and Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century (New York: Academic Press, 1974), and "American Slavery and the Capitalist World Economy," American Journal of Sociology 18 (March 1976): 1199-1213. Both these scholars tend to reduce everything that happens locally in the "periphery" to causes in the capitalist "core." The world capitalist system, it must be stressed, was only one variable, a context for additional variables in local material and social conditions. For a correction on world systems theory by an anthropologist who draws from a vast literature on capitalist development and the articulation of modes of production, see Eric R. Wolf, Europe and the People Without History (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982). For the insightful views of a historian, see Steve J. Stern, "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean," American Historical Review 93 (October 1988): 829-872. Wallerstein's reductionism is apparent in his comments following Stern's essay.

40. John Schlotterbeck's study of Orange and Greene Counties, Virginia, discusses the process of agricultural and social "devolution" that occurred as these counties switched their staple crop from tobacco to wheat. See Schlotterbeck, "Plantation and Farm," and "The 'Social Economy' of an Upper South Community."

CHAPTER 2

PIONEERS OF THE LOOSA CHITTO

The east side of the Mississippi, from the Yazoo River south past Natchez, is bordered by a narrow strip of flood land that quickly rises seventy-five to two hundred feet above the bottom. The black alluvial soil below the bluffs is some of the most fertile in North America. The hills, irregular, steep, and divided by narrow, deep ravines, consist of a fine topsoil collected from the prairies in the far west by centuries of winds that jettisoned their cargo when the Mississippi ridge forced them abruptly upwards. The fine, yellowish silt called loess, although acidic, is nevertheless excellent for farming, except that its powdery quality renders it extremely susceptible to erosion. Only the dense thickets of cane, with their mesh of entangled roots, aided by the canopy of a walnut, oak, and magnolia forest, hold the soil and prevent rains from carrying it away in creeks that carve their way through the hills.¹

Europeans first arrived in this corner of the world with Hernando de Soto in the early 1540s, in time to witness the final days of the Natchez civilization, the last of the

Mound Builders, whose miles of corn fields "thickly set with great towns" had all but vanished by the time LaSalle arrived a century-and-a-half later.² During the 1700s the French established forts in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Native Americans had by then been so reduced in numbers by Old World diseases that they did not figure at all in the invaders' plans for an inland fur trading empire.³ The white men simply took whatever land they desired as though it were vacant, which, compared to de Soto's day, it was. In one final gasp of life the Natchez massacred the inhabitants of Fort Rosalie and wiped out Fort St. Pierre on the Yazoo Bluff; the French retaliated, chasing survivors into the woods, where they disappeared forever. When the English took command of the east side of the river, the Choctaw, who had eagerly assisted the French in their war on the Natchez, had moved into the territory left by the vanquished nation. They, too, now faced extermination.⁴

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Choctaw and other nations in the Mississippi and Gulf regions supplied Europeans with furs, as well as corn, beans, squashes, and meat, in exchange for manufactures and liquor. By the end of the century, the pattern had reversed; they depended on the Europeans for food. The deerskin and hide trade had, gradually at first, depleted the forests of the wildlife that had been a most plentiful source of sustenance. The more scarce deer and bear became, the more

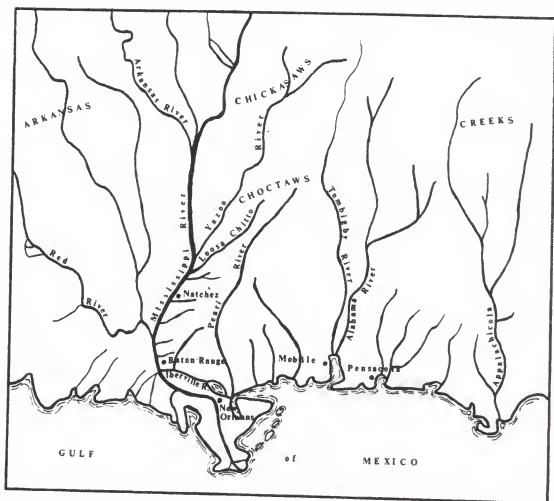


Figure 2-1. Lower Mississippi Valley.

Native Americans relied on trade with whites to maintain their standard of living, which in turn only accelerated the skin trade. As the Indians moved out of empty forests, white homesteaders moved in. By the 1770s, the Choctaw were fast running out of room. Northward lay the hunting grounds of the Chickasaw, whose situation was no better. Still farther north, the fur trade along the Great Lakes had pushed the nations of that region into the land around the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. From the south came an onslaught of white settlers.⁵

The Lower Mississippi Valley had several claimants, and spent most of its colonial history being shuttled amongst them. At the beginning of the eighteenth century France controlled the whole valley. Following military defeat in 1763, however, the French ceded all their North American possessions to colonial rivals. England acquired the east side, and governed it as part of the colony of West Florida. Spain, in return for relinquishing Florida to the British, received the west side of the river, and New Orleans. In 1779 the Spanish, capitalizing on Britain's troubles with her rebellious colonies, seized Natchez and the east side of the Mississippi up to the Yazoo River. Until the century's end the Natchez region remained a part of Spanish Louisiana. In 1795 the United States took possession of the east side of the Lower Mississippi, at least officially; the Spanish did not actually leave for another three years. Spain ceded

the west side of the river, and the city of New Orleans, back to France three years before the Louisiana Purchase, when the whole valley came under the control of the United States. Not surprisingly, with all the changing of hands, the borders of the Mississippi were settled slowly. Above New Orleans the land was mostly vacant of European inhabitants until the years of British dominion. After 1763, a steady stream of migrants from England's Atlantic colonies flowed into the area around Natchez. People kept coming even after Spain's capture of the Mississippi's east side. It was at this time, principally during the years from 1775 to 1795, that European settlers built the first permanent homes in what became Warren County.

The pioneers--men with families, some without, some with slaves--cleared fields and built cabins along the Loosa Chitto, a river that emptied into the Mississippi sixty or so miles above Natchez, and which later represented Warren County's southeastern border. They came with little more than a few tools, perhaps some livestock, and some ideas about the kind of life they wanted to carve out of the wilderness for themselves and their families. Yet, the wilderness had its own ways; its demands were not easily compromised. The very nature of the pioneer economy and society that appeared on the Loosa Chitto owed little to the past experiences of the people who came there and virtually everything to the moment, as they struggled, adapted, and

learned to survive in a new environment. The outside world, the world left behind by the men and women who journeyed to this place, was only barely visible. However, it was visible. Pioneering, although it surely seemed like it entailed leaving the rest of the world behind altogether, actually extended the civilization of the center into the periphery. Indeed, the long tentacles of the European economic system had already touched this part of the world in the form of the fur trade, long before settlers planted their first crops. Government and politics, too, soon made themselves felt even in this distant corner of the globe. Thus, the energy that drove Warren County's process of economic, social, and cultural evolution had two sources. One radiated within the locale, as people confronted and continually altered their local environment. The other dynamic force came from the wide and always moving world in which this small place was situated. Context was at once local and global, but the two were often indistinguishable.

The Proclamation of 1763 forbade settlers from Britain's North American colonies from locating beyond the headwaters of the rivers flowing into the Atlantic. British West Florida stood as the exception to this restriction. Thousands of homesteaders from older regions who might otherwise have headed due west over the Blue Ridge and into the Ohio Valley migrated instead to the Southwest. The

British colonial administrators, eager to encourage settlement in the new colony so that England's hold on it might be secured against the Spanish presence in New Orleans and on the west bank of the Mississippi River, enticed the hesitant with a liberal land grant policy.⁶ In order to enhance this scheme, royal officials made large donations to individuals and organizations who promised to populate them shortly with English subjects or foreign protestants.

Steady migration continued through the Revolution and Spain's reclaiming of the territory in 1778, raising the number of inhabitants along the east side of the Lower Mississippi. In 1770 approximately 500 whites lived around Natchez, but by 1790 the population had grown to about 2,000 whites plus half as many mostly enslaved blacks.⁷ All thirteen of the Atlantic colonies sent voyagers to the Mississippi, on flatboats down the Ohio from the backcountries of Pennsylvania and Virginia, by ship along the coast and around the peninsula into the Gulf Of Mexico, or overland from Georgia through Creek Country. Most travelled in bunches of several families, bringing with them little more than the essentials needed to start a homestead--a gun, an axe, two or three spades, maybe a cow, and perhaps a plough. The great expanse of wilderness that enclosed the Lower Mississippi settlements formed no barrier against the "ambulatory spirit" of the newcomers. "One carbine and a little flour and corn in a sack suffice for an

American to cross the forests alone for one month," explained the Spanish Governor of Louisiana. "With the carbine he kills oxen and deer to eat, and defends himself against the savages." But the numbers of migrants spilling into his territory perhaps gave the governor a false impression of the ease and facility with which they made their trek. Eliza Williams, who as a girl journeyed down the Tennessee River to Natchez, recalled how "Indians frequently came on board with game, to barter for such articles as were provided for the purpose. And when all axes were disposed of except one that was kept for the use of the two boats, the Indians became so enraged at not being allowed to get it, that they went down a few miles, and with an armed party fired on our boat and killed one of the oarsmen, and wounded two others, then ran up the hill and sounded their war whoop."⁸

Behind the exodus to West Florida lay the same forces that pushed and pulled Europeans around the Old World, then to America's shore, inland to the Appalachians, and now to the lower Mississippi Basin. As populations grew and resources diminished in the older settled areas, life in a distant and largely unknown territory seemed more appealing. Faced with either barren or high priced land, residents in the Atlantic colonies itched for new opportunities.⁹ Of course, the growing conflict with England contributed to the migration impulse, a point not missed by the Crown, which

sought to make Florida a Loyalist haven.¹⁰ Patrick Doyle, who settled on the Big Black River, claimed in his petition for a grant of land that he left Charleston, South Carolina, "to get clear of the disturbance coming to the Northward." His neighbor John Felt, one of the Connecticut migrants, made the same claim in exactly the same words, suggesting that such pretensions could be less a sincere expression of loyalty than an ingenuous if formulaic attempt to expedite the process of acquiring land. Benjamin Barber, almost as an afterthought, attached to his petition an obsequious reminder that "he is ready to give all the assistance in his power to repulse all attempts that shall be made to take possession of this Province." There is at least a ring of truth to some of the claims--Henry Dwight told how a mob ran him out of town in New England--but on the whole, loyalism offered at best a secondary reason for relocating along the Mississippi.¹¹ Indeed, the flow of migrants commenced before conflict between the colonies and England, and continued long after the creation of the United States. The first settlers of the Loosa Chitto, the so-called Company of Military Adventurers, from Connecticut, made initial plans to move to the Lower Mississippi immediately following the French and Indian War, although it was ten years after the Treaty of Paris before any of them actually made the journey.¹²

Urges more fundamental than loyalty to a distant monarch motivated people like Matthew Phelps, one of the Adventurers who sought a new beginning in West Florida. Born in Harwington, Connecticut, Phelps was an orphan by the age of eight, leaving him to the care "of one and of another of his relations, as his necessities required or as their humanity prompted." His father had left him an estate consisting of a house plus "a small capital of about one hundred and fifty pounds." At age twenty he married, whereupon he received "but a trifling matter of property, except a decent supply of furniture for his house." Soon after marrying he sold his home and moved his family to Norfolk, where he opened a store, and "by application to his business maintained his family with tolerable decency for some time." As the size of his family grew, his business "gradually declined, and occasioned a degree of anxious solicitude about the prospects of future support for his wife and tender offspring." He had to do something, and after speaking with several people then preparing to move to the Mississippi, "he had but little doubt of its being advantageous to him to remove thither." After a preliminary visit to West Florida, but before transporting his wife and children, conflict with Britain interfered with Phelps's plans. "I ultimately determined to give up the design for the present, rather choosing to risk the loss of my property. . . than to expose the lives of a wife and rising

family." Unable to provide an adequate living for his family, Phelps had to act, whatever the risks. He decided again to move, this time to Vermont. After journeying as far as Westfield, Massachusetts, he suddenly changed his mind, and took his family to Mississippi. As they journeyed up river Mrs. Phelps and her newborn baby contracted fever and died. A few days later Phelp's boat capsized in a whirlpool, and his two young boys drowned. He arrived at his new home alone.¹³

Matthew Phelps sought only to provide for his family, refusing to allow even the Revolution to interfere with his prime objective. His effort led him to Mississippi, but it did not seem to matter to him where he went so long as he left the older colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts, so long as he went somewhere. Were it not for a change of seasons that made travel into the Green Mountains difficult he might just as well have gone to Vermont. Peter Chester, West Florida's Governor, understood people like Matthew Phelps. Their desire "to better their circumstances," he wrote, created "the natural disposition for emigration that prevails in all the old colonies."¹⁴

The families that left eastern farms and seaports took little with them. They arrived in the Mississippi Valley sometimes with even less. The fate of the Phelps family represents an extreme case of the risks involved. Those more fortunate kept their lives, if little else. Aware of their

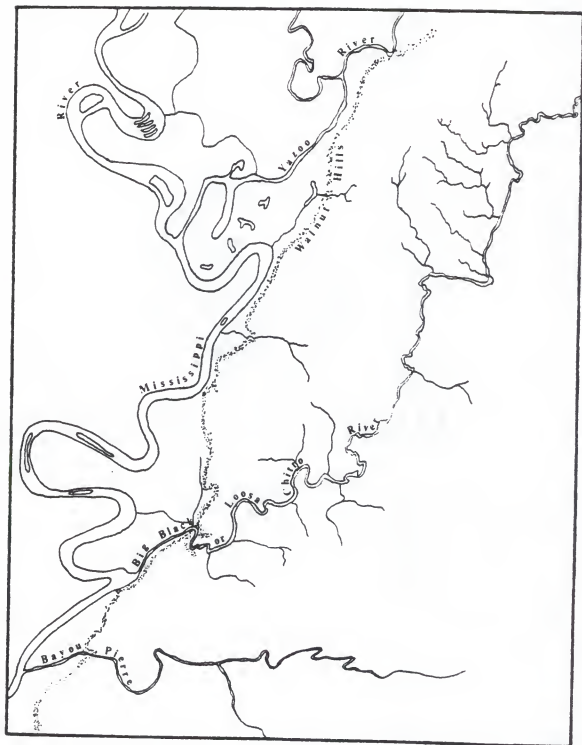


Figure 2-2. Loosa Chitto to the Walnut Hills.

condition, Chester appealed to his superiors for permission to give the newcomers aid. "When they first arrive on the Mississippi, they are with their wives and children destitute of almost every thing, and without a little assistance from hence of powder, shot, salt and corn, which it will be unavoidable to give them, they will be driven to the greatest distress during the winter." Chester received permission to hand out provisions at the colony's expense to the families that needed them most.¹⁵

Upon arrival in British West Florida, family heads and single individuals started the long and involved process of acquiring a freehold. Most applied for a family right--100 acres for the family head, plus 50 acres for each remaining family member, including slaves. Technically, the British Crown granted land for free. Officials, nevertheless, charged large and often prohibitive sums for their indispensable services in expediting initial petitions, surveying tracts, drawing plats, and filing claims. Thaddeus Lyman, one of the leaders of the Military Adventurers, paid a fee of 3,000 acres to the men who helped him secure his father's grant near the Big Black River.¹⁶ Moreover, their duties put government officeholders and their associates in a good position to discover and purchase prime land, leaving poorer quality acreage to homesteaders unable or unwilling to pay the speculators' prices. Indeed, the British governor of West Florida worried that large, empty tracts tied up in

the hands of speculators, and distinctly avoided by newcomers who sought titles of their own, effectively removed much of the best land from development.¹⁷ On the whole, however, speculation did little to effect the process of settlement along the Mississippi.¹⁸ There was simply too much good, vacant land available by grant of family right, or if one could not afford the fees, by squatting. When Phineus Lyman, the leader of the Military Adventurers, received 20,000 acres in one tract along the Bayou Pierre, just below the Loosa Chitto, he knew of a hundred New England families prepared to settle it. For years after his death in 1774, however, the land sat empty, his followers scattered around its edges on grants of their own.

Acquiring title to land during the Spanish period proved somewhat easier. Spain recognized claims held under the British, and continued to give away land on a family right basis. Spanish officials were more eager than their British counterparts had been to populate the colony, and they hastened the process of filing claims and registering titles to all who swore an oath to His Most Catholic Majesty.

The first white families to settle in the region that became Warren County claimed acreage covering a fairly flat stretch of high ground along the Loosa Chitto, near a place the Choctaw called nanachehaw, about twenty-five miles from the river's mouth on the Mississippi. They all came from the

Atlantic colonies, although no single colony or region in particular. Their backgrounds and family status were as varied as their places of origin. Clustered together on a concentration of good farm land, along a winding river that sooner or later snaked by almost everyone's door, the Loosa Chitto community, like the last link in a great long chain, sat at the farthest reaches of Britain's crumbling North American empire.

Following the river through the community in 1778, beginning about fifteen miles upstream from the Mississippi, where high ground first approached the Big Black from the left, a traveller would have come first upon the home of Benjamin Day, a hatmaker and wool merchant from Massachusetts. Day lived with his wife, ten children, and three slaves. The improvements of Jeremiah Routh, "a very poor man, and scarcely able to maintain his numerous family," lay a few turns of the river upstream on the right, adjoining Oliver Lyman's settlement. Just beyond Routh and Lyman lived Henry Dwight, another New Englander, and his two slaves. Past a long stretch of cypress swamp, the river turned sharply northward when it again struck high ground. George Grant owned 2,000 acres here, but he never showed up to take possession, so Patrick Doyle, late of South Carolina, "pitched" himself upon it. A cluster of families lived on the ridge where it reappeared on the left: Abraham Knapp, Ithamar Andrews, and Benjamin Barber all worked small

plots by themselves. John Stowers, and his son of the same name, were the first into the area. They hailed from Virginia. Behind the Stowers New Englander John Felt, his wife and child, and Thaddeus Lyman, owner of seven slaves, worked their improvements. Continuing upstream, a traveller would have found the next homestead on the left, at a place called Nanchets, and which belonged to yet another Lyman, named Thompson. The Lyman sisters, Experience and Eleanor, lived through the woods on the right, fronting the river on the other side of a peninsula. The small fields worked by Hezekiah Rue and Abijah Leonard--the latter journeyed from Massachusetts with the Days--lay nearby. Benjamin James owned the place upriver from Thompson Lyman, and just past him Matthew Phelps farmed on the hundred acres he had received for himself plus the other two hundred and fifty he had received for his wife and children, who never lived to see their new home.¹⁹

Near what must have seemed like the end of the world, these pioneers of the Loosa Chitto lived in single family households, and survived by raising a few hogs, and planting small fields with corn and vegetables. Hunting, trapping, and felling timber provided supplementary income, and perhaps a little cash. Indoors, at night, they made clothes, bullets, and whatever else they needed and could make themselves. Isolation made interdependence a necessity; neighbors exchanged the fruits of their labors and

reciprocated favors and kind treatment. Perhaps this was not the life that some of them had bargained for when they left their homes in the Atlantic colonies, and yet it had its advantages. Land was plentiful and fertile, and with luck and not too much work, once they felled some trees and planted the ground, farmers prospered. Even the precariousness of life had a way of bringing out the best in people, reflecting, as Matthew Phelps put it, "honor on the human character."²⁰ Of course, isolation was never complete. Although the community members worked out their own systems for exchanging local produce and property, and for the maintenance of order, formal and supra-local structures existed, too, from the beginning. Trade networks brought the material comforts of the center to even the farthest peripheries of the European world. Similarly, remote settlements like the one on the Loosa Chitto did not escape the touch of government and national as well as international politics.

On average, households contained five or six persons, mostly members of a nuclear family, although at least five included a slave. Seven blacks, probably the largest holding, belonged to Thaddeus Lyman. Household size ranged from one to fifteen residents. Over the next twenty years families came and went, but the size of the settlement and the make-up of its households, stayed constant, with the exception that the largest slaveholding approached ten

blacks. Nevertheless, by the mid 1790s, perhaps the majority of family heads still owned no slaves at all.²¹

There was no church. There were no public buildings. Official business, the registering of deeds, wills, and the filing of small suits for debt, meant a journey to Natchez, or Pensacola, although Thaddeus Lyman, and later Tobius Brashears, as justices of the peace, expedited some business for their neighbors.²² Nelly Price operated the nearest store fifteen overland miles away at Grand Gulf, where the Big Black emptied into the Mississippi.²³ Residents lived in and around a few small dwellings that must have seemed impermanent there in the wilderness. In petitions and surveys people almost always described the location of their homes by giving the distance from the Mississippi, the one landmark everyone recognized. Often they mentioned the name of an adjacent neighbor, but the only other reference points were, like the Mississippi, natural, or at least they predated the entry into the area of these inhabitants. Several residents, for example, gave the position of their land relative to the nanachehaw hills. A few mentioned the "Nanchets improvements," which may have been fields left by the Natchez. Sense of place, that is, some notion of where in the world one lived, was closely tied to nature, and understandably so. At this early stage of development the signs of human existence were few and fragile; nature must have seemed ageless and everlasting. This is not to suggest

that the land was untouched. Quite the contrary, the influence of Europeans in North America long preceded the arrival of the first permanent settlers on the Loosa Chitto. Diseases had thinned the Native American population. Europe's thirst for leather had thinned the deer population. But the most visible signs of human activity--buildings, fields, roads--did not exist. In short, the Loosa Chitto families needed only to glance about them to be reminded that they lived on the very edge of the European world.

The nearest place of similar size to the Loosa Chitto community lay almost a half day's hike to the south, along the Bayou Pierre. Sixty miles further stood the village of Natchez, with its "ten log houses and two frame houses" bordering recently surveyed and still mostly vacant streets.²⁴ To the north for hundreds of miles lay nothing but a small Spanish post on the Arkansas River, scattered villages of Native Americans, and the few white or half-breed traders who lived among them.

Immediately upon arrival, settlers began to make their mark on the wilderness by turning loose their hogs to forage among the trees, and by preparing small plots to plant with corn. Nearly every household brought with them, or very shortly acquired, a cow to produce milk and butter, and an ox to pull a plough. Horses, useful primarily for transportation, were something of a luxury, although most households eventually acquired at least one. But the

essential ingredients to successful homesteading lay in the combination of hogs and corn. Swine thrived among the hardwood trees, off acorns and roots, providing a nearly immediate food source with virtually no exertion of energy on the part of the farmer. Corn provided a meal for bread, and any remaining surplus fattened hogs nicely just prior to slaughtering.²⁵ Supplemented by wild game, vegetables, especially pumpkins and squashes, and perhaps some fruit--peach trees grew particularly well--households obtained a subsistence quickly, and on small parcels of land.²⁶ John Calhoon and his family of three managed, in their first year, to plant some peach stones and clear half an acre for cultivation, enough, apparently, to see them through a winter. William Selkrig cleared and fenced three acres, and erected a house, all in one year. By the next year he had time to supplement his income by overseeing a neighbor's place. In 1773 John Stowers arrived on the Big Black penniless, his worldly possessions consisting of a gun and an axe. Four years later, Stowers, "on the unremitting industry of himself and son . . . had gained a desirable competency, and was now enabled to live comfortably." Among his possessions he counted a house, some cows, a couple of steers, a store of hogs, and an assortment of farming utensils. Matthew Phelps also arrived penniless, near death from fever, and heartbroken at the loss of his wife and children. As partial compensation, however, he quickly

learned that making a living in the Lower Mississippi Valley could in fact be as easy as he had, in an initial rush of enthusiasm, dreamed. Borrowing some livestock and tools from Stowers, he set to work planting "crops." By the year's end Phelps marketed enough "pork, and such other produce as I could conveniently spare," to repay his neighbor.²⁷

The apparent ease with which homesteaders raised a sufficiency of corn and hogs provided them with time for other endeavors, such as felling timber for sale in New Orleans, or experimenting with unfamiliar but marketable crops like cotton or tobacco. Another important consequence of undemanding agriculture, however, was that it left farmers free not only to produce a surplus for market, but to make the long treks necessary just to get there. Indeed, the most serious risks to life and produce occurred after the harvest, as the farmer set out in a pirogue down a swirling and snag infested river, or on foot over a rugged path wishfully called a road. In this context, subsistence agriculture did not necessarily dissuade farmers from producing for market; instead, it may have been a necessary precondition. With essential foodstuffs secured, the risks of commercial activity became more acceptable, and the offerings of the marketplace--sugar, coffee, clothes--more desirable. At no time were the Loosa Chitto households commercially isolated.

Commercialization came slowly to the Mississippi, but not for any lack of will on the part of its inhabitants. While a British possession, West Florida exported few agricultural products. Planters below Natchez grew indigo with some success. Tobacco grew well in the district around Natchez, but partly because of distance from world markets, and partly because of a shortage of labor, it became a viable staple only after the Revolution interrupted the tobacco trade between the Chesapeake and Europe. By the late 1770s, Natchez planters grew tobacco for sale in New Orleans and England. After Spain took control of West Florida, granting the colony a tobacco monopoly within its empire, the weed became the mainstay of the Natchez district economy until replaced by cotton in the 1790s.

Farmers along the Loosa Chitto, however, throughout most of the colonial period, concentrated on raising a subsistence of corn and pork, rather than on raising commodities for distant and not easily accessed markets. Nevertheless, they depended on being able to sell small surpluses of grain and meat to local markets in order to purchase items such as gunpowder or salt, but these markets were never fully developed. Initially, demand for food crops in West Florida was virtually non-existent. Nearby farms easily supplied residents of the few small towns in the colony. Even New Orleans, the largest single market, obtained all it needed in nearby Spanish Louisiana.

Moreover, as a Spanish possession, the Crescent City's trade fell victim to the whims of officials who periodically slapped large duties on imports. In April, 1777, Spanish Governor Galvez closed New Orleans entirely to British trade. Although in practice trade regulations proved difficult to enforce, nevertheless, their presence only added to the unpredictability of the market.²⁸

The export economy of West Florida consisted mostly of the fur trade, and the shipment of timber to the West Indies. Although the commercial viability of both were subject to the uncertainties of international trade relations, they served homesteaders as readily available marketable products. Several Big Black settlers, immediately upon arrival, selected a good spot for a sawmill, with the intention of selling lumber to the Spanish.²⁹ There is no record to indicate that the mill was ever built, but they may well have floated rafts of logs downriver for cutting in New Orleans, a practice common in other settlements. During the 1770s William Dunbar, a prominent Natchez landholder, earned much of his income by felling timber and producing barrel staves for sale to the British and the Spanish.³⁰ By 1790, or shortly thereafter, Daniel Burnet had a sawmill operating on his land on Bayou Pierre, a few miles from the Big Black.³¹

Among the most commercially viable products of West Florida, under the British and the Spanish, were furs and

deer skins. To small farmers faced with a limited market for foodstuffs, the fur trade presented a valuable opportunity to exchange for items not produced by the household. John Watkins's estate inventory, the only one remaining from the 1770s, list two traps. Inventories from the 1790s, when demand for agricultural products was greater, indicate that by that time residents were occupied primarily with farming. Nevertheless, the skin trade, if not actual hunting and trapping, provided households, especially during winter months, with an important source of income. Benjamin Day, for example, earned some extra cash by tanning skins for some of his neighbors. Jacques Rapalje, who operated as a middleman between Choctaw hunters and Indian trader John Turnbull, got so wrapped up in the business of exchanging hides that he compiled an extensive Choctaw dictionary in his account book. In the spring of 1794 he paid off his account at Turnbull's store with the usual corn, pork, beef, and peas. In addition, however, and accounting for more than half the total value of the trade, Rapalje presented his creditor with 79 deer skins, 10 otter skins, and 4 bear hides. He made another payment soon after, with more of the same, plus raccoon, wild cat, and fox pelts. Furs also served as a medium of exchange, useful in a cash-scarce economy. Skins of different kinds and qualities were valued in terms of "hides," apparently a leather container of gunpowder. Thus, for example, a Choctaw hunter purchased

from a Big Black farmer 4 kegs of rum, 2 blankets, 2 flaps [?], and 6 empty kegs, worth a total of 76 hides, while another paid his debt with 4 bear skins, valued at 2 hides.³²

On the whole, however, Rapalje and the other farmers on the Big Black depended for their livelihood on tilling the soil and selling or bartering its fruits. Loosa Chitto husbandmen had little to sell but corn and pork. Surpluses of these they took to Eleanor Price's store at Grand Gulf and later to the trading post John Turnbull operated, with the permission of the Spanish, at Fort Nogales on the Walnut Hills. Price's store was only fifteen miles down the Big Black River. Nogales was a little further, requiring at least a long day's hike, and took longer if one were driving livestock. But the nearest alternatives lay at great distances to the south. Price and Turnbull conducted most of their business with Choctaw hunters, exchanging rum and gunpowder for hides. Indeed, Turnbull's connections with the Choctaw were quite extensive, having lived among them as a trader for a number of years, during which he fathered at least two children.³³ Price, a free black woman, had come to the Natchez district presumably from one of the English Atlantic colonies, perhaps as an escaped slave. She first opened a store at Grand Gulf in partnership with John Fitzgerald, a prosperous merchant at Manchac, but after he withdrew his support when the two had a falling out she took

on one Miguel Lopez as a partner and managed to maintain her business. Like Turnbull, she lived primarily off of the skin trade. Nevertheless, both provided a service for local farmers, exchanging tools, implements, and various other "sundries" for agricultural products, which they shipped down river, or sold to Native Americans and traders heading north into the wilderness.³⁴

Jacques Rapalje, who lived on the Loosa Chitto from 1789 to his death eight years later, found nearly all he needed, from blankets and brass kettles to cloth and coffee, at Turnbull's Walnut Hills trading post. Turnbull shipped in his supplies from Baton Rouge, where he kept a plantation, and New Orleans, thus saving Rapalje the effort of travelling to more distant markets, which he did rarely.³⁵ Other merchants provided a similar service. Ebenezer Dayton, a Natchez butcher and tanner, kept a pen and slaughterhouse at the Walnut Hills, where he collected cattle from local husbandmen, slaughtered them, and shipped the carcasses to his shop downriver for further processing and sale.³⁶ Merchants like Turnbull, Price, and Dayton, when they brought the market into a remote area, contributed to the physical isolation of local farmers like Rapalje, who no longer had much need to take their business to distant places. Along the Chitto Loosa local trade predominated.

Jacques and Isaac Rapalje's account book indicates two parallel networks of local exchange. First, an apparently

friendly, non-commercial circle involving near residents helped neighbors endure temporary shortages. With five families in the vicinity, the Rapaljes loaned and borrowed small quantities of food and material. "Lent Hardy Perry 4 quarts Salt 1 pint Sugar," reads one entry, which is marked "returned," the last notation added, presumably, at a later date. Another: "Lent Mrs. Stowers 2 cups of sugar 2 cups in honey," also marked "returned."³⁷ The Rapaljes were less likely to record instances when they borrowed, leaving that task to the lender, although one entry suggests that they did in fact participate as receivers in this local exchange system. One of the Rapaljes borrowed seventeen ounces of thread from Mrs. MacChristy, and later returned it to her.³⁸ Some loans they marked "paid," perhaps indicating a cash payment, although the entry might have denoted payment in kind other than an exact return of the items borrowed. Early in November, 1793, William Bassett borrowed coffee and sugar. A month later he asked for and received a little more of each, plus a yard and a quarter of cloth. Shortly thereafter he "paid" his debt, and then proceeded to borrow more: "1 bowl of coffee 2 ditto of sugar." Bassett accepted loans five times over the next two months, all in small amounts, periodically paying what he owed with cash or kind.³⁹

Although the Rapaljes carefully recorded the amount of each item they loaned, indicating an awareness of self

interest, the objective of these transactions was not monetary profit. The account book shows no cash values for merchandise loaned or borrowed. Moreover, only a handful of families, all from the immediate vicinity, participated in this network at all, and only two regularly. Finally, the items exchanged, always measured in small quantities--a cup of sugar, a few ounces of thread--allowed individuals within the neighborhood to minimize trips to distant trading posts. Convenience, not cash, was the premium. In a context of relative market isolation, reciprocal exchanges of a few items in small quantities served individual self-interests.

The bulk of the entries in the account book are more business-like, less personal in tone. They indicate a second network of exchange relations, although not one that extended any farther geographically. Except for the occasional deals with passers by, this network, like the first, involved only a handful of people from the Loosa Chitto area. The variety of items exchanged, however, was much greater, as were the quantities. And although the Rapaljes appear to have traded for kind as often as for cash, nevertheless, for all the transactions in this network they carefully recorded a monetary figure. Furthermore, whenever they purchased goods they had the seller sign a receipt proving payment. For example, John Estes signed when he received \$124.5.00 "in full for a Plow Shear & cotten Corn Some Hogs and for Sundry Tubs Fowls etc."⁴⁰

Only a few entries in the account book give a date. Calculating the difference between the price paid and received for a given item in a given year is thus impossible. On the whole, however, the Rapaljes seem to have bought cheap, and sold dear, relatively speaking. For example, over the eight year period spanned by the account book, they marked up the price of sugar and coffee an average of six cents per pound over what they paid for them. Limited information on prices requires that this point be made cautiously. In addition, commodity values fluctuated very little within the community, suggesting limited response to local supply and demand, although this, too, may reflect source limitations.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the commercial exchange network differed qualitatively from the borrowing and lending circle; participants in each did not overlap. The Rapaljes loaned to some, and sold to others, perhaps because the interests served by each type of exchange did not always correspond. Concern for profit could injure friendships, while unlimited consideration for friends was bad for business. Only their relationship with John Stowers, the Rapaljes's nearest neighbor, and probably their closest friend, was secure enough to withstand possible tensions between exchange for profit and for use. He alone participated in both circles. Furthermore, women participated regularly as borrowers, but rarely appeared as buyers, suggesting a division of labor that extended from

the household into local exchange networks. Although men and women both worked in the home, the income producing activities of housewives ceased at the doorstep, while those of their husbands extended to the outside world. Women were not, however, shut up in their houses, but engaged actively in local exchange of a more social nature.⁴²

The two local networks of distribution, one social, the other economic--although such a distinction may not be appropriate since they each contained elements of both--arose simultaneously from the Loosa Chitto community's uncertain relationship with the outside world. The former represented, on one hand, a cooperative effort to assist individual households to cope with their remoteness from the market. By distributing small quantities of select commodities available locally it reduced the inconvenience of temporary shortages and the frequency of trips to a distant market. The latter, on the other hand, by its very existence demonstrated that isolation from markets was never absolute but only a matter of degree. Moreover, no amount of communal cooperation could shield households from price fluctuations and fraudulent merchants, against which the best security was accurate bookkeeping, the close tallying of credits and debits, the signing and filing of receipts.

Scholars are divided over the meaning of local exchange. Economic historians hold up commercial networks as the inevitable and rational result of market penetration

rooted in the innate and timeless concern of even the most isolated American farmers for profit. Social historians applying a more sentimental interpretation to past civilizations, often joined by their so-called radical colleagues, champion social networks as heroic stands of traditional-minded people against the disruptive, and even oppressive forces of modernization, declension, commercialism, or capitalism. Pre-modern and pre-capitalist rural people, they continue, participated in the market cautiously, and only as a last ditch effort to preserve their cherished traditional patterns of exchange. Both interpretations are drawn from preconceived notions about the way eighteenth-century Americans thought. Neither communalism nor individual pursuit of profit were ends in themselves. Rather, they were means to ends. Loosa Chitto households cooperated by borrowing and lending because the nearest store was an arduous two day's hike away. They were responding not to traditional values, but to geography. Similarly, farmers ventured into the marketplace because they could not produce all they needed or wanted at home. But the market was a risky place. Bookkeeping--the careful calculation of monetary costs and benefits--arose, like the cooperative network, because it provided some security in the face of conditions otherwise beyond one's control. In short, both networks reflected first and foremost local

conditions and the community's relation to the outside world, not a particular way of thinking.⁴³

Two parallel systems of authority, one signifying the community's place within a larger political and economic entity, the other underscoring its remoteness from seats of power and trade, also evolved within the Loosa Chitto settlement. Relationships between neighbors, within the community, were face-to-face, personal; reputation mattered. There was a certain sense of honor in Jeremiah Routh's poetic appeal for leniency from creditors--"He can prove by his neighbors that although poor he has always maintained a large family of children by the sweet [sic] of his brow and paid his debts until now."⁴⁴ But as the very existence of court records demonstrates, outside authorities played an important role in mediating relations even in so remote a place as the Big Black. In 1774 the planters around Natchez petitioned the Governor's Council to set up a court to handle the collection of debts. The economy was growing, albeit slowly, as the center of trade in the colony shifted from the Pensacola-Mobile region to the Mississippi.⁴⁵ Within a regional trade system that brought strangers together into creditor-debtor relationships, personal reputation carried little weight. Authority, therefore, had to be formalized. Both systems, however, operated simultaneously.

While the need to formalize relationships may have been less pressing within the Loosa Chitto community than elsewhere in the colony, once the court began to meet at Natchez it offered some advantages over the informal arrangements worked out between neighbors in the court's absence. For example, the court was better equipped to handle cases in which debtors absconded, disappearing beyond the pale of local, informal authority.⁴⁶ More importantly, the formal authority of the courts mediated relations that extended beyond the community and the pale of local structures that rested on personal honor. For example, a reputation as a hard worker who always paid debts stood one in good stead with neighbors, with people whom one knew personally. Distant, unknown associates felt more comfortable with the security provided by the court. Moreover, personal reputation was not everything. Even the most honorable and well intentioned man, like Jeremiah Routh, could easily lose control over his affairs simply because life was very unpredictable. Routh's honesty did not protect his farm from pillaging by Choctaw warriors. The predictability of the court, however, gave his creditors added security. More importantly, it allowed them to depersonalize what otherwise was a very personal matter; to collect compensation without holding Routh personally responsible for something--the attack on his farm--that was beyond his control. The formal, impersonal power of the

court, therefore, did not undermine local systems of face-to-face authority. The greatest problem with personal reputation as a basis for authority was that people tended to become very touchy. Attacks on their integrity or motives were received, and answered, personally. But lodging a suit and letting a judge decide the matter placed some distance between confronting parties. Creditors did not challenge a debtor's honor as directly as they would have if they knocked on his door and demanded payment. Similarly, debtors came away from law suits with their self-esteem intact, confident that a judgement had been executed against them by an unknown officer of a distant court who could not have based his decision on reputation, and who therefore could not be understood as having attacked that reputation. The court, in short, did not replace informal arrangements within the community. Quite the contrary, it helped them to continue.⁴⁷

A similar relationship existed between outside formal and local informal rights to property. When Matthew Phelps first appeared on the Big Black, he "secured a tract of land that suited me, by paying to a resident fifty dollars to relinquish his possession in my favor which by the custom of the country ensured a title to me." He then returned to New England to collect his family. Phelps arrived two and a half years later to find "that the title to my land had, according to the usage [sic] of the country, reverted to

another, and strangers had become, rightfully as it respected them, possessed of the property on the soil which once vested in me."⁴⁸ Phelps had purchased title from a squatter, which, according to custom, made the land his. But, again according to custom, in his long absence he lost his title. Squatters' rights, in which Phelps place such confidence, evolved as the only viable way to establish and hold a claim. The land office was miles away in Pensacola, and legal title took time and money to process. The procedure of acquiring legal title, however, did not replace custom; it worked with it. So long as the formal process remained slow and expensive, custom continued to serve a useful function, and so long as custom remained insecure, landowners sought legal title, as Phelps eventually did. In some cases, families had to market at least one crop to raise the fees necessary when applying for a family right. Unable to "pay the expenses of taking up a piece of land," Jeremiah Routh squatted, acquiring legal title only after Anthony Hutchins, a prosperous Natchez landowner and speculator, offered to pay the costs in return for half of Routh's entitlement.⁴⁹

In one sense, then, two communities appeared on the Loosa Chitto. There was a interior community of interdependent households who concentrated on raising a subsistence of food, taking only small surpluses to local markets and purchasing items not available within the

community, exchanging commodities locally so as to minimize each household's need to interact with the outside world; an interior community with its own ways of determining how one established a claim to a piece of land, who was worthy of a neighbor's assistance, of how things were done. At the same time there was an exterior community in constant interaction with the rest of the world, initially by virtue of having been settled by people from elsewhere, but hence forth by regular contact with world markets, as in the case of the fur trade, and as part of a larger political entity that imposed its authority from distant places. Over the period under study, through the middle of the nineteenth century, these two communities coexisted, and developed symbiotically, although there was a distinct shift in emphasis from interior to exterior.

In the spring of 1778, recalled Matthew Phelps, "the distresses of the revolutionary war began to afflict our remote settlements, and on a sudden put a stop to the efforts of honest industry, and agricultural enterprise among us."⁵⁰ The British had since the beginning of conflict worried about holding their shaky West Florida outpost, and with good reason. Sparsely settled, poorly defended by only a few hundred troops, and adjoining the much more populous Spanish Louisiana, the colony seemed indefensible, especially if Spain were to join the fray alongside France.

England hoped to keep the conflict a domestic affair. Spain concurred, reluctant to risk angering the British, whose trade had become vital to Spanish New World possessions. But the necessity of remaining neutral seemed more apparent from the vantage point of Madrid than it did from New Orleans, where Governor Bernardo de Galvez entertained American proposals for a Spanish supported raid on British West Florida. Plans eventually materialized in the form of James Willing's expedition down the Mississippi. Looting and sacking plantations, then withdrawing below the Spanish line, only to strike again, Willing brought the Revolution to the Mississippi.⁵¹

War and the Royal Navy's blockade of New Orleans brought trade to a standstill. Farmers had no way to market their produce. The flow of credit ceased as hard pressed lenders called in loans even at the risk of ruining debtors. Making matters worse, Native Americans took advantage of the general disruption in authority to pillage homesteads near their territory. John Farquhar "was compelled to give up his property to his creditors on account of the failure of his crop." Claiming he "had done everything in his power to do justice to his creditors," Farquhar "sold his plantation and had much trouble to make a crop this year on the plantation on which he is now settled; he asks that his creditors wait until the end of the present crop when he will divide the whole among" them. Jeremiah Routh told his creditors how the

"Indians have stolen every one of his horses and reduced him to giving his last cow to pay a debt to a certain Thomas Green, his hogs that were not taken by the Indians are running wild in the woods." At the time of "the very unhappy revolution," Choctaw warriors drove Justus King and his brother Caleb from their home. Settling closer to the fort at Natchez, the Kings managed to live off savings while their land sat abandoned for nearly ten years. Willing's raiders actually carried off William Selkraig, and in his absence Native Americans plundered his farm. He never returned to it.⁵²

By the signing of the second Treaty of Paris in 1783, most of the Big Black families were gone. The Lymans, supporters of the British during the War, fled the Spanish, who by then controlled the district. For the time being Matthew Phelps gave up farming, enlisted with the British, and eventually returned to New England, settling in Vermont. There he remarried and started another family. Indians killed John Felt. Most of the remaining settlers moved closer to Natchez, near the protection of Fort Panmure. By the war's end following the Spanish seizure of the Natchez district in 1779, only John Stowers remained on the Big Black, although even he apparently kept another home thirty or so miles to the south at Fairchild's Creek. But the war's interruption proved brief. After 1783, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, migration to West Florida started

again, and newcomers arrived to replace those who had left. They brought hogs and a few cattle, took up planting corn on the same plots of cleared land, and lived in households of the same size. In short, the Revolution changed only the names of the families that lived along the Loosa Chitto. It disrupted lives, but not life, within the community.⁵³

Notes

1. Hugh Hammond Bennett, The Soils and Agriculture of the Southern States (New York: Macmillan Co., 1921), 213-15, 225.
2. Verdadera Relacam, Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto in the Conquest of Florida, as Told by a Knight of Elvas, and in a Relation by Luys Hernandez de Biedma, Factor of the Expedition, Buckingham Smith trans. (New York: n.p., 1866).
3. Alfred W. Crosby, Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 215. On the consequences of European diseases for Native North Americans, see Henry F. Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983).
4. Gary B. Nash, Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 108-09.
5. Daniel Usner, "The Frontier Exchange Economy of the Lower Mississippi Valley in the Eighteenth Century," William and Mary Quarterly 44 (April 1987): pp. 167, 180-82. John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 18-24.
6. The policy and process of land distribution in West Florida is detailed in Cecil Johnson, British West Florida: 1763-1783 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 115-31. The crown, fearful of the effects of heavy English emigration on wages and rents, ceased granting land in February, 1774, and began selling it in plots at set prices. See Bernard Bailyn, The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 74.

7. Marcus L. Hansen, "The Population of the American Outlying Regions in 1790," American Historical Association Annual Reports 1 (1931): 405; Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1933), 2:897. In 1774, Lt. Governor Elias Durnford estimated that 2,500 whites and 600 blacks live on or near the Mississippi. His figures, however, include the more densely populated territory below Natchez, around Baton Rouge, Manchac, and along the Amite River. Johnson, British West Florida: 1763-1783 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), p. 155.
8. Carondelet to Don Luis de las Casas, Nov. 24, 1794, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, RG 26, vol. 22, letter no. 129, MDAH; Marshall (Maria Chotard and family) Papers, Hill Memorial Library, LSU; Dorothy Williams Potter, Passports of Southeastern Pioneers 1770-1823 (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1982), pp. ? ; Bernard Bailyn, Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), p. 483.
9. Bailyn, Voyagers, 482. For a good, brief overview of the migration patterns of English men and women in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, see Bernard Bailyn, The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985). Robert A. Gross, The Minutemen and Their World (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), conveys a sense of how one New England town, by the time of the Revolution, seemed old and with little left to offer its sons and daughters.
10. Johnson, British West Florida, pp. 144-149. Wilbur H. Seibert, "Loyalists in West Florida and the Natchez District," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 2 (March 1916): 465-83.
11. Petitions of Patrick Doyle, John Felt, Benjamin Barber, and Henry Dwight, 111-E, microfilm reel 4, U.S. General Land Office, Records, Division D, RG 49, West Florida Claims 1760-1800, British Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.
In his account of the Company of Military Adventurers, Robin Fabel concludes that loyalism was not the real reason for the move to the Mississippi. Robin F. A. Fabel, Economy of British West Florida, 1763-1783 (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press), pp. 193-95.
12. The story of the Company of Military Adventurers is detailed in Robin F. A. Fabel, The Economy of British West Florida, 1763-1783 (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 153-97. The settlement of the lower

Mississippi region is treated more generally by Bernard Bailyn, Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 475-94.

13. Matthew Phelps, Memoirs and Adventures of Captain Matthew Phelps, formerly of Harwington in Connecticut, now Resident in New Haven in Vermont, Particularly in Two Voyages from Connecticut to the River Mississippi, from December 1773 to October 1780. . . . Anthony Haswell comp. (Bennington, Vermont, 1802), 8-11, 13-14, 50-54.

14. Chester quoted in Bailyn, Voyagers, p.483.

15. Johnson, British West Florida, pp. 137-38; Chester quoted in Bailyn, Voyagers, p.482.

16. Johnson, British West Florida, pp.127, 130-31.

17. In 1773, the crown suspended the granting of large tracts. Johnson, British West Florida, pp. 141-42. Fabel, Economy of British West Florida, pp. 168, 175. May Wilson McBee, comp. The Natchez Court Records, 1767-1805: Abstracts of Early Records (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), 96. Cecil Johnson, "Expansion in West Florida, 1770-1779," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 20 (1934): 488.

18. On the importance of land speculation in the process of migration and settlement in Britain's colonies generally, see Bailyn, Peopling of British North America, pp.65-85.

19. See note 20.

20. Phelps, Memoirs, p. 103.

21. Claims, surveys, and petitions, 111-E, microfilm reels 3 and 4, U.S. General Land Office, Records, Division D, RG 49, West Florida Claims 1760-1800, British Collection, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida; Great Britain, PRO, Colonial Office, CO 5/607, pp. 216,217, CO 5/608 pp. 269, 447, British Collection, P.K. Yonge Library; Fabel, Economy of British West Florida, pp. 183-87; Marion B. Bragg, "British Land Grants in Warren County, Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History 26 (1964): 231-33; McBee, Natchez Court Records, pp. 232, 483.

The number of people in this community circa 1778 can be roughly estimated. Nineteen household heads have been identified. Women, both daughters of Phineus Lyman, headed two of them, while single men headed at least seven. For several, the record indicates the size of the household, and if the remaining received land based on family right, that

is 100 acres for the head of the household, and 50 acres for spouse, each child, and each slave, then the total population would have been about a hundred. This total includes 14 known slaves, although there might well have been more. Thompson Lyman, for example, had 600 acres, suggesting that his household consisted of himself plus 10 other people, some of whom may have been slaves. The estimate of total population, on one hand, may be high. Some grants, particularly those given to the Lyman women, may not have been based on family size, but may instead have been given as bounty for loyalty to the Crown. On the other hand, the total cannot account for unknown squatters who lived in the area. At least one, Peter Doyle, squatted on land that belonged to George Grant, an absentee landowner, and several others had squatted before petitioning for title.

In 1796 Jacques Rapalje counted 132 "souls" in 23 households: Rapalje Notebook, typescript, pp. 5-6, MDAH.

22. Court established in 1774. Johnson, British West Florida, p. 143. Lyman administered an oath and signed John Felt's petition for land in 1777. West Florida Claims, reel 4, British Collection P. K. Yonge Library.

23. Margaret Fisher Dalrymple, ed. Merchant of Manchac: The Letterbooks of John Fitzpatrick, 1768-1790 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), p. 162.

24. Quoted in Robert V. Haynes, The Natchez District and the American Revolution (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), 19. See also, Johnson, British West Florida, p. 145, 212.

A table of distances between various points along the Mississippi River is in: Thomas Hutchins, An Historical Narrative and Topographical Description of Louisiana, and West-Florida, with an introduction and index by Joseph G. Tregle, Jr. (1784; reprint ed. Gainesville, Fla: University of Florida Press, 1968), pp.

25. The Spanish census for 1792 reports crops and livestock. In that year, among Big Black households, the largest holding of cattle was twenty. The largest holding of hogs was one hundred and forty. Only half the households had a horse. Of the four crops reported by the census--indigo, tobacco, cotton, corn--Big Black farmers raised only the last. Spanish Census of Natchez District, 1792, MDAH.

On the advantages of hogs over cattle in a forested environment, see: Marvin Harris, The Sacred Cow and the Abominable Pig: Riddles of Food and Culture (New York: Touchstone Paperback, 1987; previously published as Good to Eat, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 113-14.

26. As he passed by the Walnut Hills in February, 1797, Andrew Ellicott noted: "A number of peach trees which had been planted on the hills were now in full bloom." Andrew Ellicott, The Journal of Andrew Ellicott (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962), p.39. According to Alfred W. Crosby, the Spanish introduced the peach to North America, where it grew like a "weed." By the time the English arrived this European invader had become thoroughly naturalized. See: Crosby, Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 156-57.
27. McBee, Natchez Court Records, pp. 512, 579; Walter Lowrie, ed. American State Papers. Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, in Relation to the Public Lands, From the First Session of the First Congress to the First Session of the Twenty-Third Congress: March 4, 1789, to June 15, 1834 8 vols. (Washington D.C., 1834), 1:570; Phelps, Memoirs and Adventures, pp. 31, 105-06.
28. Martyn (Michael) letter, August 17, 1774. MDAH. Fabel, Economy of British West Florida, pp. 119-24. John G. Clark, New Orleans, 1718-1812: An Economic History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 184, 189-92. Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 2 vols. (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution, 1933), 1:159. Robert V. Haynes, The Natchez District and the American Revolution (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), p. 41.
29. Martyn letter, MDAH.
30. Fabel, Economy of British West Florida, pp. 120, 124.
31. McBee, Natchez Court Records, p. 123.
32. McBee, Natchez Court Records, p.246; William Brocas vs. Benjamin Day (1781), vol. F, p. 5, and John Stowers, et al. vs John and Samuel Watkins (1781), vol. F, p. 20, and Eleanor Price vs. John Stowers (1783), vol. G, p. 74, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, RG26, microfilm, MDAH; Rapalje Notebook, typescript, pp. 8-15, 23, 25; Dalrymple, Merchant of Manchac, pp. 162, 347-52.
33. William S. Coker and Thomas C. Watson, Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Pantón, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847 (Pensacola: University Presses of Florida, 1986), 168-69, 172, 175.

34. Eleanor Price vs. John Stowers (1783), vol. G, p. 74, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, RG26, microfilm, MDAH; Dalrymple, Merchant of Manchac, pp. 162, 347-52.
35. Rapalje's notebook mentions one transaction in Baton Rouge, and none at Natchez or New Orleans. On Turnbull, see Coker and Watson, Indian Traders, p. 175.
36. Dayton (Smith J., Joseph, Ebenezer) Papers, NTC; McBee, pp. 217, 278-79, 281.
37. Rapalje Notebook, typescript, p. 2, 20.
38. Rapalje Notebook, typescript, p. 31.
39. Rapalje Notebook, typescript, p. 20, quotation from p. 18.
40. Rapalje Notebook, typescript, p.17.
41. See Appendix B, Table B-1.
42. See Appendix B, Table B-2.
43. The literature on commercial development in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century countryside is surveyed in: Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," William and Mary Quarterly 46 (January 1989), 120-44. Kulikoff tries to claim middle ground between the two positions, but lands squarely on the side of the marxist social historians, although his views are particularly obtuse in their formulation.
- It should be mentioned, lest I be accused of creating straw people, that Winifred Rothenberg, a leading economic historian of markets and the transition question, has objected to what she claims is a misleading caricature, fostered by glib social historians, of economic history as the story of the pursuit of profits: "Households in economic theory are not assumed to be profit maximizers at all, but utility maximizers." In the very next sentence, however, she shows her true colors, and defines "utility" in terms of income and budget constraints. "The Bound Prometheus," Reviews in American History 15 (December 1987), 633.
44. McBee, Natchez Court Records, p. 303.
45. By 1777, a year after streets were laid off in Natchez, four merchants made the town their place of business. Haynes, The Natchez District, p. 19.

46. William Brocas vs. Benjamin Day (1781), vol. F, p. 5, and John Stowers, et al. vs. John and Samuel Watkins (1781), vol. F, p. 20, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, RG 26, microfilm, MDAH.

47. Some of these ideas are treated, although somewhat differently, in Bruce H. Mann, Neighbors and Strangers: Law and Community in Early Connecticut (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 9-27. Mann sees litigation as being every bit as personal as the debt relationships that they settled, which begs the question of why people would take their affairs to court in the first place, instead of settling them personally, in the neighborhood, face-to-face. It makes more sense that the formality and regularity of litigation made confrontation less personal, thus defusing conflict while at the same time allowing creditors to receive compensation, and debtors to maintain their integrity.

In any case, the most important point made by Mann, one with which I agree, is that formal authority and legal procedure complimented local and personal systems of credit and exchange. The South was no less litigious than colonial New England.

48. Phelps, Memoirs and Adventures, pp. 30, 102. Emphasis is added.

49. McBee, Natchez Court Records, p. 232.

50. Phelps, Memoirs and Adventures, p. 107.

51. Robert V. Haynes, The Natchez District.

52. McBee, Natchez Court Records, pp. 189, 303, 305, 579; Lowrie, ed. American State Papers, 1:570.

53. McBee, Natchez Court Records, pp. 9, 23, 93, 104, 577; Lowrie, ed. American State Papers, 1:566; Fabel, Economy of British West Florida, p.

CHAPTER 3
ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION
AND THE RISE OF THE PLANTERS' WORLD

If the Revolution did not directly alter ways of life along the Loosa Chitto, geopolitical changes following American Independence most certainly did. In particular, a combination of circumstances shifted the economy away from a local, community subsistence endeavour toward a more individualistic and commercial orientation, which resulted in a transformation of social relations that altered the very nature of the Loosa Chitto and surrounding communities. The process began when the Spanish opened their markets in New Orleans and the Caribbean to West Florida farmers, officially for the first time. Meanwhile, they continued to restrict as much as possible the flow of goods into their territory from the United States, thus giving Natchez area producers an advantage over their counterparts in Ohio and Kentucky.¹ Most immediately, Spain, holding tenuously to the Natchez District, shored up its defenses against the newly formed United States by constructing forts and stationing more soldiers in the area, with two effects. First, the Spanish governor of the Natchez District, Manuel Gayoso de

Lemos, negotiated with the Choctaw for the right to build a fort high on the Walnut Hills overlooking the Mississippi River, thereby pushing the border between Europeans and Native Americans permanently north of the Big Black River to the Yazoo River, opening more territory for settlement, and placing the old boundary more safely within Spanish territory. Second, the presence of more soldiers and their supporters provided local husbandmen with additional consumers for their produce, especially livestock. The Spanish army's hunger for meat made beef a commercially viable product. Cattle herding, however, proved to be only the first small step in the rise of commercial agriculture, for it enabled farmers to purchase slaves and take advantage of even greater opportunities presented by the cotton market. And cotton changed everything.

In 1790, Gayoso received permission from the Baron de Carondelet, Governor of Louisiana, to commence building fort Nogales. That year Gayoso hired thirty carpenters, most citizens of Natchez, and within a month they had cleared sixty acres, built five palisades with twelve canons in place, nearly completed a warehouse for groceries and ammunitions, and had started on a house for the commandant. By September of the next year, several buildings, including a bakery and butcher shop, stood on the bluff. Stone masons then took over from carpenters, as construction continued on the brick fortifications that eventually replaced the

hastily erected wooden enclosures. In addition, Gayoso had his men clear "a communication road and fences, six leagues long, from Los Nogales to Black River." By January the completed fort housed sixty soldiers.²

The commandant and his troops lived off of local resources. His superior in New Orleans, promising to send only rice, suggested he contract for beef. Farmers from the area responded immediately to this new opportunity, driving cattle along the new road for sale at the fort, or to Ebenezer Dayton's slaughterhouse when it open in the mid-1790s.³ Soon, swelling herds of wandering steers had become a nuisance all over the Natchez District. In a proclamation issued in February, 1793, Gayoso laid down the region's first stock laws, setting a minimum height for fences around planted fields, regulating slaughtering procedures, registering brands, requiring all herders to maintain a "public pasture" on their property with a strong stockade for the impounding of strays and the sorting of cattle belonging to different people. On the Big Black, Garret Rapalje and Tobias Brashears gathered their neighbors and erected such a pound. The governor established a scale of fines to enforce the new regulations. Although the presence of the Spanish military presented husbandmen with new opportunities, it also meant that relations within local communities were sometimes strained, particularly when cattle bound for market wandered into the gardens of small,

more subsistence oriented agriculturalists. Moreover, by reaching out of the locales to participate in a growing market, farm settlements invited the regulation of a government no longer so remote, and in whose interest it was to promote regional livestock trade over local exchange. In a pattern that would repeat itself over the next several generations, political organization fast followed economic expansion and development.⁴

Production for market had other consequences. Like never before, farmers found themselves caught in a growing web of indebtedness. Cash had always been short. Economic growth only worsened the situation. Debt encouraged further production for market, which only led to further indebtedness. This cycle, too, would be repeated. By February, 1792, the number of court executions against debtors threatened commerce within the Natchez District. Gayoso responded by proclaiming the region's first, but not last, debtor relief laws, suspending all executions, although requiring that property be mortgaged to current creditors.⁵ At the same time, the trickle, and then stream of agricultural products shipped down the Mississippi River by Ohio Valley farmers swelled to a flood, presenting Natchez District products with tough competition. An international border regulated by customs collection officers at Fort Nogales, and later at Loftus Bluff, restricted, but did not prevent, the development of a larger

regional trade system, with local specialization based on competitive advantage.

For lower Mississippi inhabitants, competition from Ohio and Kentucky nearly proved ruinous. The trade from the North ended the momentarily profitable tobacco business at Natchez, and cut into the local corn and pork market.⁶ In short, as late as 1795 the chances seemed slim that agriculture and animal husbandry along the Loosa Chitto would ever develop much beyond what it had been twenty years earlier--production for local subsistence with small surpluses of a few items finding their way to market often enough to supply the community with items not produced in the home. Cattle herders best withstood competition from Ohio and Kentucky. While advantages in soil and climate gave Ohio Valley farmers an edge over their Lower Mississippi Valley counterparts, they suffered from their great distance from New Orleans. Ohio Valley meat survived the long journey to market without spoiling only when cured and packed in barrels. This presented northern farmers with several problems, not the least of which was their lack of access to sea salt for packing. Consumers, moreover, preferred fresh beef over the cured variety, a demand local producers in the Lower Mississippi were able to meet by walking steers to market and selling it on the hoof.⁷ Consumer preference for fresh meat did not extend to pork, however, and Mississippi

farmers faced direct competition from northern producers of bacon and ham.

The first commercial farmers in the region extending from the Loosa Chitto to the Walnut Hills, then, were primarily cattle herders who sold their steers to Spanish soldiers and bureaucrats at Nogales and Natchez. Through the 1790s, as the pace of migration into the Mississippi Valley accelerated while the Spanish prepared to turn the Natchez district over to the United States, the market for beef expanded. By 1800 the wealthiest and most prominent families in the region tended herds of a hundred or more steers. While households continued to raise hogs for home consumption, as a marketable product they gave way to cattle. For example, in 1792 Tobius Brashears kept 140 hogs and 10 cattle. Ten years later he paid taxes on 100 cattle, and at his death a few years following his herd numbered 150 head, while his drove of hogs had shrunk to a mere 13 sows and pigs. Brashears responded to the combination of a growing demand for fresh beef and competition from northern producers of pork by taking up cattle herding.⁸

In addition to its ecological advantages, as a commercial enterprise raising livestock in a newly settled area also offered homesteaders crucial economic benefits over agriculture: Herding required a minimum of labor.⁹ On average, a single hand could tend approximately thirty cattle.¹⁰ A father with two children of age ten or so could

maintain a herd of nearly one hundred head, and take twenty to market each year.¹¹ Open range grazing on the huge expanses of still unsettled land, moreover, meant that farm size did not limit herd size. At five dollars a head, cattle herding could be very rewarding.¹² It may seem surprising, then, that the Loosa Chitto's cattlemen were also the region's first slaveholders, especially in light of the low demands herding placed on labor. Cattle raising, however, did not require slave labor so much as it made slaves affordable. A herd of two hundred brought an annual income worth half the value of the average male slave. If the herd were reduced by half, one hundred cattle sold at once along with the year's increase of twenty, the money obtained from the sale would have bought two slaves, or perhaps a man, woman, and child. The impulse to spend profits in such a way came not from cattle, however, but from cotton.

Loosa Chitto herders were not part of an ancient tradition extending back in time and across the continent to the backlands of the eastern states, or across the Atlantic to Celtic Scotland, as some historians have argued.¹³ Livestock farming arose as a response both to local conditions and needs and to the locale's place within a regional and ultimately a world economic system. The first homesteaders along the Loosa Chitto initially raised hogs because they thrived with a minimum of attention in southern hardwood forests, and thus provided an abundant source of

meat. As the first product raised in surplus, hogs became the first marketable commodity. A combination of developments outside the Natchez District, however--the opening of New Orleans and the Caribbean trade to Natchez producers, growing tensions between Spain and the United States and the subsequent militarization of the Lower Mississippi, the opening of the Ohio Valley to American farmers, and finally the flood of Americans into the Lower Mississippi following Spain's evacuation--created a growing demand for beef that Loosa Chitto homesteaders were well situated to meet. Similar developments, both locally and beyond the immediate vicinity, turned cattle herders into cotton planters.

In 1795, one John Barclay introduced into the Natchez District a cotton gin. Local landholders immediately contracted mechanics to construct similar machines.¹⁴ By the end of the decade, if not sooner, Benjamin Steele and Anthony Glass operated a gin, apparently the area's first, on the Loosa Chitto just below the Rapalje settlement.¹⁵ Each year cotton farms appeared a little farther up the Mississippi River from the Big Black. By 1806 a settlement of "about twenty New England families" reportedly raised "great quantities of cotton, and make some portion of it into thread."¹⁶ Another year and the plant reached the Walnut Hills, as "flowering, verdant, and lofty trees," gave way to fields of cotton and corn, "whose rows are so varied

in direction by the numerous hillocks and gullies on the side of the hills, as to give great beauty and variety to the whole, which, in the spring season look like one extensive garden."¹⁷ By 1835, the region along the Mississippi between the Big Black and Yazoo Rivers--Warren County--produced annually between 25,000 and 30,000 bales of cotton. The 1840 census reported a total in excess of 32,000 bales, the second highest county total in the State of Mississippi.¹⁸

Prior to the appearance of the cotton gin in the Mississippi Valley, Loosa Chitto farmers limited their cultivation of the crop to one or two hundred pounds of seedless cotton, an amount requiring less than an acre of land, if they grew any at all. The labor required to extract seeds by hand made short staple cotton cultivation in larger amounts unfeasible. John Hutchins, who lived near Natchez, recalled how the women of his neighborhood used every spare moment to prepare cotton for spinning. When they went to visit a neighbor they "would fill their aprons with cotton to amuse themselves with on the road by picking out the seed."¹⁹ Whitney's invention dramatically changed this, raising the limit of production to the picking, rather than seed extracting, capacity of available hands, and thereby permitted small farmers to respond positively to the high price of cotton. By replacing cotton with corn, Loosa Chitto households could have easily doubled the market value of the

crop they produced on a per acre basis.²⁰ Not everyone took up its cultivation, however. Indeed, while some households immediately began to grow and market the new staple, others showed a marked disinterest in the crop. The transition to cotton cultivation cannot be explained simply as the consequence of the invention of the ginning machine, a response to high prices, or access to the cotton market. While all were necessary conditions for successful cotton planting, they cannot account for the transition away from simple homesteading toward staple agriculture.

Pioneer homesteaders took up commercial staple agriculture in earnest when they were satisfied that two conditions could be met: First, they had to be able to afford the initial costs of cotton planting and marketing, in particular, this meant they had to afford the expense of a gin and press. Of course, this cost was not born individually, but spread between neighbors, either directly when they invested in implements as partners, or indirectly when they paid for access to privately owned machines. Nevertheless, capital for initial costs had to be raised somehow. Second, and more importantly, assuming they had access to a local gin and press, farmers still had to be assured that they could take up staple agriculture without sacrificing those aspects of their lifestyle that they most valued. Cotton planting promised to increase one's standard of living, or at the very least secure it at its present

level of comfort. If, however, it threatened indebtedness, financial ruin, loss of land, and even abject poverty, then its purpose was lost. Moreover, quality of life was not measured in purely financial terms. Any endeavor, no matter how profitable, lost much of its appeal if it meant additional drudgery under the hot sun. Cotton planting, therefore, could not be permitted to interfere with traditional rhythms and expectations of work and leisure.

Cotton planting entailed certain risks.²¹ Families that relied on the market for their livelihood, rather than food raised in their own fields, risked their land and property, their very survival, on the chance that the market would bring an income sufficient to purchase food they could have raised at home. This was a gamble that few small farmers, with little personal property to sell in the event of a drop in cotton prices, chose to take. Instead, they devoted labor and land to raising enough food to guarantee that their families could eat, and only then applied what resources remained to the cultivation of a staple crop.

Farmers did not simply plant their fields with the crop that offered the greatest monetary return per unit of land and labor. Crops were not interchangeable, and some, particularly those that could not be eaten in the event of market failure, presented a serious risk. Yet, farmers weighed still more in the balance than the possible financial benefits of cotton versus the costs of losing

their land and means of livelihood in the event of market disaster. Few took to cotton entirely, even when their subsistence was assured and risk removed.²² Moreover, the notion of risk really applies only to situations in which cotton and corn competed for the same land, a situation, in other words, where farmers, by planting cotton, necessarily reduced the amount of land available for their subsistence crop of corn. In a recently and sparsely settled area, however, landowners did not face this dilemma. Risk, therefore, cannot account exclusively for why some Loosa Chitto homesteaders took up cotton planting while others did not.

Of course, individuals not familiar with cotton agriculture faced the additional risks brought by their own inexperience. Although most had probably grown a little cotton for home use prior to even considering growing it for sale, the problems of one novice may not have been isolated. The first season Richard Harrison "ever attempted making a crop of cotton," he delayed picking until too late in the fall, "after the leaves and snow had fallen and mixed with it." Once baled, the already damaged crop then sat "on an open boat where it lay several days exposed to excessive rains." Needless to say, Harrison's "first essay was not sent to the market as prime cotton," and was condemned by inspectors.²³ However, so long as one did not borrow against a crop, and continued to cultivate subsistence

requirements, then lack of experience did not really present any problems.

No farmers, not even those striving most earnestly to be as self-sufficient as possible, spent all their time and energy hoeing corn and herding livestock. They had plenty of time to experiment, to learn, as Harrison did, by trial and error how to raise a new plant. Pioneer or backcountry farmers, who planted little more than their families and livestock needed for food, spent much less time in the field than more commercially oriented agriculturalists who raised as large a surplus crop as possible. Slash-and-burn agricultural techniques combined with extensive use of such natural resources as wild herbs, roots, and game enabled homesteaders to meet household needs with a minimum of agricultural activity.²⁴

In one day a single family practicing slash-and-burn agriculture could deaden several acres of forest sufficient for planting a first crop. By removing rings of bark they killed trees quickly, and then burned away underbrush, leaving a layer of ash for fertilizer. Although the trunks of large trees remained standing, rotting away over the next year or two, plenty of sunlight reached the fresh and weed-free soil below. During the initial settlement period when uncleared land was in abundance, only the shortage of mills for making meal limited the surplus production of corn. The family head could tend to at least six or seven acres of

corn and peas, a garden of pumpkins and squashes, a small orchard, a drove of hogs, and a herd of thirty cattle. The initial high productivity of new land diminished after one or two season, but when yields declined backcountry farmers simply deadened a few new acres of forest and planted anew. In this manner they provided plenty of food for their families, and had enough corn remaining to fatten nicely the several hogs which, along with five or six cattle, they marketed every year. Livestock alone could bring an annual income of a hundred dollars for supplies and manufactures, no small sum in a time when cloth enough to outfit his whole family could be had for only ten dollars, a pound of shot plus another of powder for sixty cents, two hatchets for a dollar, a brass kettle for almost half that price, and sugar and coffee for only fifty cents per pound. Upon the physical maturing of a son and his assumption of a full work load the household could have doubled its agricultural output, but since subsistence was already secured, this increase was all surplus. In short, homesteaders met subsistence requirements with relative ease, provided, of course, natural disasters and sickness, both beyond their control, did not intervene. They were free to spend extra time, energy, and resources beyond those necessary for maintaining subsistence levels, raising cotton, with no fear that inexperience might bring ruin.²⁵ By further diversifying the farms operations, cotton could actually reduce the risk of catastrophe by providing

the household with the means of purchasing grain should torrential rains destroy the corn while it was sprouting, or should an early frost ruin it before it had milked, the latter, admittedly, an unlikely event in Mississippi. Moreover, cotton did not have to be sold raw, but could be used in the household and neighborhood as homespun, thereby reducing reliance on outside manufactures.

Two questions arise: Why, if cotton could be planted without risk, did Mississippi Valley farmers with access to a gin and press, not take up its cultivation with great gusto, especially during the years before 1820 when cotton prices were so high? Conversely, if subsistence homesteading was so simple and risk free, why bother planting cotton at all? The answer is that cotton, because it could be planted risk free, was integrated into the local subsistence economy. Cotton, in other words, did not represent a radical change, but instead became part and parcel of the simple homesteading life. Only in retrospect does the transition from subsistence to staple agriculture seem abrupt, or revolutionary. As it occurred, however, there was nothing revolutionary or transformational about it. Cotton planting offered a means to preserve the pioneering lifestyle at the moment when households found it harder to maintain every year. At the same time, cotton planting became easier, not only as gins and presses became more available, but roads improved and river barges became more numerous, and as New

Orleans merchants established warehousing and marketing facilities. The transition to commercial and staple agriculture did not involve a clash between two opposing ways of life, as some historians suggest. Instead, it was characterized by a meshing of the two--one local and subsistence oriented, the other market and profit oriented. For the moment, each welcomed the other.

In sparsely settled regions cotton and corn did not compete for land, contend for the farmer's energy, or contest for attention during the crucial moments of planting and harvesting. The seasonal cycles of the two crops differed. Cotton, planted in the very early spring, or even late winter, required little attention until picking time in September and October, while the long southern growing season meant that corn planting could be left until later in the spring, and then harvested in the late fall or early winter.²⁶ A single, healthy farmer, such as the one used in the earlier example, could have planted, in addition and without risk to the corn that provided his household's subsistence, five or six acres of cotton. Moreover, the energy of each additional laborer would have enabled the production of that much more cotton. A household of six, including three field hands, could have cultivated the ten or so acres of corn necessary to meet subsistence levels, while also planting fifteen to eighteen acres with cotton.

The logic of formal economics suggests that families with available land, and with their subsistence levels of food production secure, should have responded to growing market opportunities for cotton according to the number of hands available to work in the fields. For example, a family of six, with a father and son working in the fields, could have worked the six acres of corn necessary to feed the household, plus an additional ten acres of cotton.²⁷ A family of eight, with three adult men, could have cultivated twenty acres of cotton without risking subsistence requirements. Yet, formal economics to the contrary, this is not what such families did. Regardless of household size or family members available to work in fields farmers did not plant cotton unless they owned slaves.²⁸

Nonslaveholding households could plant cotton for the market without risking their subsistence, but there were other high costs that they could not evade--alterations in quality of life, and specifically, a reduction in leisure time. Economic historians rarely weigh the costs in time and energy of extra work against the benefits of staple production. More often they assume the maximization of all resources, including labor. Yet, a household head, if he or she were to maximize their potential to plant cotton without reducing subsistence levels of corn, might have to double the total amount of time spent digging in the dirt. Needless to say, hours spent fishing, hunting, making clothes,

mending fences, constructing out-buildings, visiting, or simply loafing would be reduced accordingly, compensated for only by the items that could be purchased with the cash acquired from the sale of a bale or two of cotton. This was a tradeoff that few nonslaveholding households made, especially when presented with other marketable alternatives to cotton, principally cattle.²⁹

The relationship between work and cotton cultivation can be expressed by the model illustrated in Figure 3-1. A nonslaveholding household head tending without help from family members acreage enough to maintain a subsistence in corn would be required to work at a level represented by point C. If, in addition, he were to plant as much land in cotton as he possibly could, his total work load would rise to point A. For each additional field hand in the household, such as mature sons, the total amount of work per hand required to maximize cotton output declines along the line A-B. But the total amount of work required to maintain nothing more than a subsistence would also decline with additional hands, along the line C-D. The two lines, therefore, represent, respectively, levels of maximum of work and of minimum work (maximum leisure). Presumably, actual work would fall somewhere in between the two. The level of work at point C--that required by a subsistence farmer feeding a wife and two or three children--can be taken as an acceptable or tolerable level that young

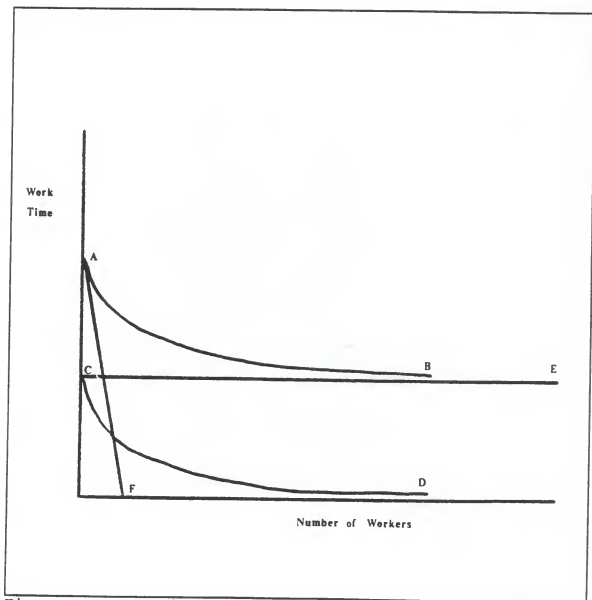


Figure 3-1. Relationship between Work and Cotton Planting.

household heads voluntarily accepted when they took up homesteading. As sons matured and contributed as laborers a larger proportion of time and energy could be expended on cotton cultivation without raising total work levels per hand above point C. The area between lines C-E and C-D, therefore, represents the work per hand that could be devoted to cotton without raising work levels above the tolerable level. Note that as the number of workers increases, the level of work necessary to maximize cotton output approaches the tolerable level of work. A nonslaveholding family with fifteen or more hands could nearly maximize cotton output without working more than that required by a subsistence farmer working at level C. In reality, of course, few if any nonslaveholding households were so large. A more likely family of eight, including a father and three mature sons, could produce some cotton without working above the tolerable level, but would have to be willing to increase their work loads substantially to maximize cotton output. In short, while nonslaveholding families could produce small amounts of cotton, additional work loads served as a strong disincentive against the maximization of cotton production. The inclination to maximize leisure would become even stronger with age and the deterioration of health. Fathers, for example, might choose to cut back on their work loads as sons came of age, rather

than taking advantage of additional family labor to increase the household's cotton production.

For slaveholders, the scenario was entirely different. Slaves did not choose their own level of tolerable work, but were forced to maximize as nearly as possible their labor output. For slaveholders, the work required by the master in order to maximize cotton output drops quickly, along line A-F, so that even one or two slaves would allow the maximization of cotton output without requiring any additional labor input by the slaveowner. At point F the master would not have to work in the fields at all, except as overseer.

Available resources, market accessibility, prices, and degree of risk all account for only a small amount of the variation in cotton production. The best single predictor of cotton output was size of slaveholding. Cotton, because its agricultural cycle did not interfere with the corn cycle, demanded an increase in the amount of labor per person if output were to be maximized. While cultivation of both crops allowed masters to keep their slaves busy for most of the year, for nonslaveholders it meant deciding between leisure after the corn crop was taken care of, and additional work raising cotton. For free laborers, but not for slaves, leisure, or at least non-agricultural activity, was an expected break between work in the fields. Cotton, precisely

because its cycle complemented that of corn, interrupted the natural rhythm of work on small, subsistence oriented farms. By extending the planting season, and lengthening the harvest, it contradicted notions of time.³⁰

The model has other implications, which are addressed in later chapters. But to mention an example: The relationship between a father who wished to maximize household cotton output and his sons who enjoyed their leisure would have been strained. Of course, this was precisely the tension, only on a larger scale, that arose when slaveholders forced hands to maximize their labor output. The tolerable level of work for slaves, who enjoyed none of the benefits of work beyond the bare subsistence level, if that, would have been well below that of whites on nonslaveholding farms.³¹ The success of individual masters, therefore, hinged to a large extent on their ability to develop effective incentives, whether negative or positive, that encouraged their hands to work.

Slaves, of course, preceded cotton into the Mississippi Valley. Their presence eased the transition to staple agriculture. The pioneer farmers of the Loosa Chitto and Walnut Hills purchased and kept a small number of slaves more for their usefulness in maintaining the family farm rather than as investments aimed at increasing farm income. This may be a fine distinction, but it is an important one. The objective of the household head was to ensure a

comfortable living for his or her family. Like an ox or a plow, or a hired hand, a slave sometimes proved useful to this end. Being an owner of slaves was not an end in itself; it was a means to guaranteeing the survival of the household enterprise. Over time, as it became more difficult to farm successfully without slaves, providing a comfortable life for one's family increasingly required owning slaves. Only when the two--slaveownership and maintaining the standard of living--became associated did slaveownership become an end in itself.

What the pioneer farmers really needed was the occasional assistance of an extra hand. The abundance of land lured away young whites who might otherwise have offered their services as wage laborers, and who instead only added to the demand for labor. In other regions of the country, farmers solved this problem through cooperative labor exchanges--neighborhood barn raisings offer perhaps the most famous example--when several households pooled their labor resources to meet the needs of individual members of the group. This sort of activity occurred in Warren County, to be sure, but settlers in the Natchez District found an alternative means of meeting their labor requirements through the combination of purchasing and hiring slaves.

Slaves entered the local neighborhood as the property of one of its residents. Initially they were few in number.

Once one or two members of the community purchased slaves the urgency for others to do so lessened, for they could meet all their labor requirements by hiring their neighbor's slaves. And the first farmers to purchase slaves could rest assured that they were not going to add an extra burden to their households so long as they had neighbors who would take slaves off their hands when not needed. Once in the neighborhood slaves functioned in the local economy very much as wage laborers, except that their condition was permanent. They drifted from household to household working for cash or kind where ever their labor was needed. The owners's requirements came first, but they could not keep their hands busy all or even most of the year, and when they had no use for them they turned them out to find work elsewhere, or to otherwise raise their own subsistence. Indeed, following the Haitian Revolution the Spanish Governor of Louisiana worried that his colony's slave population was too idle. To remedy this problem he urged slaveowners "to assign Fields to their slaves, for their own cultivation, and to their use, which will not only put them more at their ease. but also increase the mass of the productions of the province, and advantageously employ the time they might otherwise spend in riots, and debauchery."³² Thus, from the perspective of the whites, slaves were a community property. From the perspective of the blacks, the

white community, not one particular farm, formed the context of their existence.

Selections from Jacques Rapalje's notebook illustrate the pattern of slave hiring in the neighborhood of the Big Black before the cotton boom. Terms were short, usually a month but sometimes a day. Wages were calculated in dollars, although usually paid in kind. Hired slaves performed a variety of tasks, usually heavy labor from field work to splitting rails. In April, 1796, for example, Rapalje hired Dick, a slave belonging to neighbor James Frazier, for ten dollars per month, which he paid in corn and seed cotton. At about the same time Rapalje agreed to pay "Negroes Isaac & Jack"---there owner is not named, and they apparently just showed up looking for work---pork and deer skins for "making 500 rails." "Mr. Perries Jack began to work here the 1 November," earning ten dollars a month, at least part of which Rapalje paid in cash. George received credit for two weeks work. For a single day during the November harvest time, Rapalje hired seven slaves from a Mr. Vashera to finish hauling the corn crop. In 1802 Isaac Rapalje "Hired of Stephen Gibson one Nigro Wench and 3 Children at five Dollars per Month began the first of June to work till the first of November."³³

Payments in kind indicate that hired slaves worked only for their own subsistence, and not for their owners's profit. During lulls in the agricultural cycle, when masters

had nothing for their hands to do, and no wish to feed and board them for doing nothing, slaves sought their keep elsewhere. Residents of the community on the Big Black thus adapted slavery to the needs of pioneer farming, using bound laborers almost as communally owned property, exchanging them as they did implements, draft animals, and their own labor.³⁴ Unlike newly settled regions in the northern United States, the first farmers in Warren County had access to the nearby slave labor markets of Louisiana and the Caribbean. Slave labor, however, was only one more among many productive resources that helped in the struggle against the wilderness, the conditions of which shaped this evolving society, including patterns of labor, just as it shaped pioneer societies elsewhere. The ready availability of slaves then permitted pioneer settlers to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the cotton market.³⁵

The key to understanding the transition from subsistence to staple agriculture in the Mississippi Valley lies in the region's proximity to slave labor markets and in the process of capital accumulation within pioneer settlements. Backcountry homesteaders generated capital in a variety of ways: improving land; selling timber; hunting and trading furs and skins; supplementing diets with game and food sources gathered in the forest, which left them with a larger marketable surplus of corn; making tools, or furniture, or constructing buildings. The process tended to

follow a series of steps, with the capital raised in one applied to the next. For example, families often squatted on land, hunted and gathered and raised a first crop sufficient to pay the costs of acquiring title. Once the land was theirs they could continue to improve it, enhancing its value, and either sell or use it as collateral with creditors, who would be more willing to provide farmers with tools and hardware. Providing a neighbor with a little work, or perhaps the use of some tools, might bring a sow in return, which would forage in the woods, mix with local stock and multiply. Small sales of pork and bacon further added to family coffers. Before long the family could claim amongst the community herd that grazed in the swamps near the river, a cow or two, which would provide them with oxen to pull a plow, and eventually, with a small herd of their own. The growth in demand for fresh beef, and the concurrent rise in competition from Ohio Valley grain and pork producers, made cattle herding the easiest way to raise the most capital. Cattle, thriving with a minimum of attention in the cane breaks and grassy marshes of the Mississippi Valley, became, in effect, a profitable "cash crop" that underwrote the costs of slave labor. By raising and selling beef, farmers accumulated the capital necessary to make the transition to cotton agriculture without having to make their lives any more difficult than they already were. Nonslaveholders could have planted cotton, sold it for cash,

and in time saved enough to purchase a slave. However, before any additional income from cotton found its way into their pockets, they had to reduce time spent on domestic manufacturing, or repairing buildings, and they had to sacrifice the immediate gratification of leisure. The prior presence of a few slaves, the availability of additional labor at nearby slave markets, plus the profits of cattle herding to pay for them, removed this dilemma, thereby opening the door to cotton agriculture. But it was the nature of the pioneer economy, based on extensive use of natural resources, slash-and-burn agriculture, and cooperation between neighbors, that allowed families who arrived with little more than a gun, an axe, some corn and pumpkin seed, and the clothes on their backs, to become prosperous farmers, herders, and even cotton planters.³⁶ Of course, the growth of slavery and the transition to cotton agriculture, once under way, entailed the decline of the pioneer economy that had made the transition possible in the first place. Latecomers, therefore, faced a different set of conditions and alternatives. If they prospered it was by other means, such as renting slaves from wealthier neighbors. Nevertheless, the backcountry economy did not contradict, restrict, impede or conflict with the spread of staples agriculture. Given the right conditions it led directly and even smoothly to it.

Traditionally, historians have understood the antebellum southern economy in one of two ways. The first view holds that the South was essentially a capitalist society of profit maximizing cost minimizing slaveholders, and poorer farmers who aspired to be capitalist planters. This view builds on an old interpretation of American history as essentially the loosening of environmental bonds and the playing out of the original settlers' dream of material prosperity and huge profits.³⁷ According to a second view, southerners were not capitalists at all, or at least large portions of the population were not profit motivated, but instead strived to maintain a more traditional social order.³⁸ However, the results of the capitalist or non-capitalist debate is ultimately unsatisfactory. There is little point to merely identifying the capitalist and pre-capitalist characteristics of southern, or for that matter American, society: Both existed simultaneously from the seventeenth into the twentieth century. The whole period was one of gradual transition, during which there was a blend of both. The crucial questions, therefore, should concern the transitional process itself, how it occurred, and how it affected the people who lived through it, and how in turn those people affected the process. The evolution of one society rooted in a pre-capitalist mode of production into something quite different occurred in part because of outside forces, but

also because of an internal dynamic driven by people adapting themselves to their environment in order to survive, and in so doing altering their environment and the nature of their economy and society.³⁹

That pioneer farmers and cattle herders were able to make the transition to staple agriculture is not a sufficient explanation for why they in fact chose to do so. Why did they purchase slaves and begin planting cotton? Were they not content to live as semi-subsistence corn and livestock farmers? What were their expectations and aspirations? A fuller understanding of how Mississippi Valley cattle herders took up slaveholding and cotton planting needs to consider more than the conditions that made it possible for them to do so. It must account for why they wanted want to be something other than what they were.

Few probably aspired to more than Phineus Lyman, who foresaw a new colony with its capital on the Big Black where he would preside as governor, and with a grand public college to teach, among other things, the secrets of agriculture to the children of Native Americans, French, and English.⁴⁰ The expectations of others were more modest. One man, frustrated after years of struggling on a farm in New York, took his wife to Mississippi, where he thought the two of them could live more easily and comfortably by running a mill.⁴¹ Matthew Phelps later recalled that when he first

saw the Big Black, the place seemed full of promise for one whose only desire was to provide a comfortable living for self and family. "The soil appeared to me to be remarkably good, the situation of the place delightful, the ease of transportation of produce to market very apparent, and the probability of New Orleans forever forming a mart of trade, sufficient for the country around, scarce admitted of a doubt in my mind." The "superior prospect of soon becoming possessed of a desirable competence," he continued, put to rest any lingering doubts about the "reputed unhealthiness of the climate."⁴²

Initially, however, expectations taken to the Mississippi Valley did not matter much, except in determining very generally who came and who stayed, and even in this instance the only criterium seemed to be a vague notion that the place of destination offered more--a feeling that apparently motivated people from everywhere, from all walks of life. But the wilderness proved a great equalizer. Whether one owned twenty thousand acres like Phineus Lyman, or two hundred like John Stowers, whether one was a prosperous Massachusetts merchant like Benjamin Day, or a struggling Connecticut storekeeper like Matthew Phelps, on the Loosa Chitto, all lived as simple homesteaders, planting corn on small plots, herding hogs, driving cattle, raising families in crude dwellings, trading mostly with neighbors,

accumulating a minimum of comforts. The story of the Rapalje family illustrates the point.

In 1774, Garret Rapalje, a prosperous New York merchant with connections in the colonial government of British West Florida, sent his son Jacques to Pensacola, where he requested a grant of land. The Rapalje's received 25,000 acres, which they settled with New Yorkers and a shipload of slaves brought from Guinea. The proceeds from the division and sale of the grant went towards the purchase of a working plantation near Baton Rouge, on which the elder Rapalje and his several sons intended to settle themselves as landed gentlemen. Shortly after their arrival on the Mississippi, Garret and his son Jacques returned to New York to collect remaining family members. The Revolutionary War intervened, however. Unable to receive permission to leave New York, Garret entrusted the Baton Rouge plantation to a younger son who had remained behind. Thirteen years later Garret and Jacques returned to the Mississippi, only to find their property greatly reduced by sales for debt, and their son and brother unwilling to relinquish title to his elders. Undaunted, and still well connected, Jacques and Isaac, another brother, received grants from the Spanish government, totalling 1,600 acres along the Big Black, where they eventually settled, while their father settled on an abandoned farm on the Walnut Hills. Yet, prosperity still proved elusive. Over his remaining few years Jacques scraped

a tiny section of his 900 acre tract, and then died, bankrupt and in debt. His many creditors saw to it that appointed appraisers made an accurate inventory of his estate. They did not find much: some farming utensils, household furniture, a large spinning wheel, two muskets, three pairs of breeches. They also noted the crop, in storage and in the ground: 25 acres of corn, a few more of potatoes, and "about twelve hundred pounds of Cotton of the last Crop in the seed."⁴³ Jacques managed better than his father, who built a small house and planted potatoes until, exasperated, he returned to New York to die. Isaac, the youngest son, survived by planting corn, raising cattle and hogs. As late as 1805, the heir to the Rapalje family's thirty year endeavor to build a landed estate lived in a small cabin with the slave and the free black who worked beside him in his small field.⁴⁴

Clearly, material realities on the peripheries of civilization could dash the dreams of even the most resolute individuals. Ambitions and great expectations, however, were not inconsequential, although here one must be particularly careful to distinguish between the perspective of the outside observer, and that of the subject. Isaac Rapalje would not have considered his family's history to have been a failure. Quite the reverse; there are indications that he perceived himself to have, in some sense, arrived as a landed gentleman even as he planted corn and herded cattle

like any dirt farmer. Thus he referred to himself as Don Rapalje, and later by the title of Captain. He also gave a name to his home--Nanachehaw--a Choctaw word that lent a ring of timeless permanence to his recent and fragile existence. To be sure, his dream of achieving the status of landed gentleman had been tailored drastically to conform to reality. Survival demanded as much. But when opportunity presented itself--to plant cotton for profits greater than he had ever experienced, to become a master who no longer toiled in the hot Mississippi sun but who instead lorded over his chattels like a true landed gentleman--he was ready to seize it without a moment's hesitation.

No one who lived along the Loosa Chitto and the Walnut Hills at the end of the eighteenth century could have been oblivious to the ways and means of life elsewhere. All had come from the eastern states, and some from Europe. They knew how people lived in New York City, in western Connecticut, along the Carolina coast, and in the Virginia backcountry. Much closer to home were Natchez, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans, where upon every visit small farmers could not have helped but notice that there was more to life than a log cabin, corn, and cattle. As members of, and witnesses to, a mesh of regional, national, and ethnic cultures they carried in their heads a variety of lifestyles. Their experience and ideas suggested who or what they might become, and perhaps even how they thought of themselves; the

realities of life in the Mississippi Valley in the world of the late eighteenth century dictated what could be, and sometimes what must be. For the people of the Loosa Chitto, like Don Rapalje, lord and master of all the cattle and corn he and his two black laborers could tend, life was an inseparable blend of the real and the imagined, but which the historian, if careful, can pull apart.

Mississippi Valley herders, at least those who could afford the expense, took up slaveholding and cotton planting because they believed there was nothing to lose and much to gain. They knew exactly how much to gain every time they journeyed downriver to the land of the Louisiana sugar planter, or east to the Carolina coast. They knew what could be theirs every time they walked into a store and saw silver cups, looking glasses, fine imported clothing. And who in 1800 had ever suffered by planting a little cotton? Future generations would know better. Of course, there were some who came to the Mississippi Valley expecting to spend their years raising little more than a subsistence, a "desirable competence," as Matthew Phelps put it, and they might have been content to do so if it had turned out that that was all they could do. But the life of a subsistence farmer was no longer so easy. As wildlife vanished and with it the skin trade, as farm products flooded into the Lower Mississippi from the Ohio Valley, cattle, and then cotton, a plant so well suited for southwestern soil and climate, and viable

once the seeds could be removed from its sticky fibers with relative ease, appeared more attractive to small farmers desiring only to continue the standard of life to which they had become accustomed. In other words, not everyone who farmed cotton took to its production with an eye to replacing a life of simple homesteading with one of gentlemanly leisure and opulence. Even the simple life demanded that one produce something marketable, if only to purchase the items that kept life simple.⁴⁵

As more and more people poured into the Mississippi Valley, as the wildlife disappeared, and as forests gave way to fields, aspirations, ambitions, ideas of how one wished to live or ought to live mattered less. Just as the wilderness had forced gentlemen to live like simple farmers, changes in the material conditions that supported the pioneer economy encouraged simple farmers to plant cotton. Some, perhaps because they were sons of eastern planters or merchants, doubtless turned to cotton production because they were predisposed to do so. They had grown up in a commercial world. Moreover, if commercial aspirations had already gotten them into debt, as they had Jacques Rapalje, then they had all the more reason to raise a crop that promised them much needed cash or credit. But even small, mostly subsistence farmers increasingly looked to cotton, just as they had earlier to animal skins and furs, as a marketable commodity that provided the means of acquiring

necessities and consumer goods not produced on the farm. When there was no longer any game to hunt, and when the public land on which they formerly grazed their livestock was now fenced in and planted with cotton, farmers who wished to be self-sufficient were nevertheless forced to turn to the market; cotton brought great returns. In planting cotton, however, they need not have been striving to get rich, but only striving to maintain a standard of living, a standard that had rested on extensive exploitation of natural resources, which, as they diminished, had to be replaced.⁴⁶ But the intensification of production that cotton represented required greater inputs of labor. An increase in work also represented a negative change in the standard of living, which the husbandmen of the Loosa Chitto fended off by purchasing, or, as the number of slaveholders grew, by renting slaves.

By 1794 the wildlife had disappeared from the forests near the Loosa Chitto and the Walnut Hills. Choctaw hunters, who lived by trading skins for rum, were leaving the area and roaming the territory on the west side of the Mississippi River, but apparently with little success. The Spanish Commissioner to the Choctaws and Chickasaws reported that the Indians "are in a most wretched condition this year," and that they would journey to the annual gift giving ceremonies with the Spanish in great numbers. This year, not

just the braves, but "even the old women went to get the presents," for "they are dying of hunger."⁴⁷

Thus, as the deer vanished, so too did the Choctaw and Chickasaw, although not so quietly. The decade of the 1790s was marked by warfare, as starving Indians raided farms, and in particular, the cattle herds that wandered amongst the trees and grasses near the river's edge. White settlers responded by building block houses and organizing militias, both for protection and vengeance, and in the end they won out. But their's was not a military victory. The fate of the Indians was sealed with the shooting of the first deer for trade, an act so harmless on its own, and apparently so sensible because it cost that hunter nothing, and brought him abundant material rewards from European merchants. The skin trade, begun as purely an addition to the subsistence economy of the Native Americans, cut into that subsistence as the game diminished. Soon they traded not for luxuries, but for food. And when the deer disappeared and they had nothing left to trade, they starved. At the mercy of a government and economy controlled by whites, they tried to take up agriculture, even cotton planting, but ended up trading away their land. In 1837, with sorrowful resignation, they walked the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma.⁴⁸

As quickly as the Indians vacated the region around the Loosa Chitto and the Walnut Hills, whites moved in, at first replacing wildlife with hogs and cattle, then replacing even

the trees with fields of cotton. Like the Indians before them, the first settlers lived off the resources of the forest. As natural resources diminished, they turned more to agriculture. In a pattern similar to the one that ended the Choctaw's way of life, agriculture, and particularly the planting of staples for market, brought to an end the pioneer economy and society. The decline of the skin trade increased the importance of livestock as a source of food, and as a marketable commodity. Most importantly, cattle herding enabled farmers to purchase a slave or two and take up cotton planting. Cotton raised their standard of living; it gave them access to civilization. But as more people planted cotton, the cattle ranges shrunk, a problem that accelerated as people flooded into the Mississippi Valley. Cotton, once a luxury planted after a subsistence in meat and corn was secured, became an integral and indispensable source of household incomes, replacing the large herds of cattle. For households with several slaves already, this presented no problem, for they planted more and more cotton. Families with few or no slaves, however, lost an opportunity of ever becoming a wealthy cotton planter, once cattle herding became impossible. They still planted cotton; everyone did. It was the only marketable commodity left to them. But income from cotton no longer went toward luxuries. It purchased food and other essentials. And as the forests were rolled back, as rains eroded the naked soil, as year

after year of planting depleted the ground of its life giving potential, households struggled even more to maintain their standard of living. And so they planted even more cotton, which only accelerated the process.⁴⁹

Within the space of two or three decades, a generation, the pioneer homesteads along the Loosa Chitto and the Walnut Hills were replaced by cotton farms and plantations of various sizes. With this transformation came corresponding changes in the character of relations between the people. Reliance on the market drew households out the their neighborhoods and away from each other. It altered the responsibilities of men and women for production within the home, and thereby rearranged relations between husbands and wives. As slaveholders continued to prosper, their associations with less prosperous neighbors were modified. And as cotton planting became a way of life, instead of a sideline occupation, the existence of the slaves, the people who raised the all important crop, was transformed too. Material transformation provided context for the evolution of southern society; more than that, it was its source.

Notes

1. John G. Clark, New Orleans, 1718-1812: An Economic History, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), pp. 210-214. According to Clark, trade between Spanish New Orleans and U.S. farmers was greater than Arthur P. Whitaker suggested in his book The Spanish-American Frontier: 1783-1795; The Westward Movement and the Spanish Retreat in the Mississippi Valley (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), although it was considerably less

than it became after the Spanish evacuated the Natchez District. In 1798, the year the U.S. actually assumed control of the Natchez District, although still six years before acquiring New Orleans and Louisiana, American inland farmers sent one million dollars worth of products to New Orleans. R. W. Towne and E. Wentworth, Pigs: From Cave to Corn Belt (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 183.

Cut off by the Appalachian Mountains from eastern seaboard markets, Ohio and Kentucky farmers looked to New Orleans as the best outlet for their produce. Indeed, during the 1780s, restricted navigation of the Lower Mississippi became, according to Thomas P. Slaughter, "the greatest single grievance" of farmers from western Pennsylvania south to western North Carolina, heating the frustrations that boiled over in the Whiskey Rebellion. Slaughter, The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 35.

2. Carondelet to Gayoso, January 17, 1792, Despatches of the Spanish Governors, Book 7, pp. 296-99, quotation from p. 299, Pace Library, University of West Florida, Pensacola. Note: This letter reads more like it was written by Gayoso to Carondelet. Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, vol. IV, January 1792-June 1793, RG26, MF33, p. 5, MDAH; Abraham P. Nastir, Spanish War Vessels on the Mississippi 1792-1796 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 157n-158n; William S. Coker and Thomas C. Watson, Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Pantón, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847 (Pensacola: University Presses of Florida, 1986), pp. 166, 167.

3. Estevan Miro to Gayoso, January 29, 1791, Despatches of the Spanish Governors, Book 7, p. 164, Pace Library, UWF. William Hartley, for example, delivered carne fresca, fresh beef, which may mean on the hoof, to Nogales in February, 1794. For other examples of beef sales to the Spanish by Loosa Chitto herders, see: Certificaciones de credito, Los Nogales, 1794, No. 30, Archivo General de Indias, Papales Proccedentes de Cuba, legajo 534, microfilm roll 71, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University.

4. Holmes, "Livestock in Spanish Natchez," Journal of Mississippi History 23 (January 1961): 15, 26-35, and Gayoso: The Life of a Spanish Governor in the Mississippi Valley, 1789-1799 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 101-02, 113; Guice, "Cattle Raisers of the Old Southwest: A Reinterpretation," Western Historical Quarterly 8 (April 1977): 177-78.

Government, in the form of regulations, dogged frontier settlers wherever they went. See Malcolm J. Rohrbough, The

Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions 1775-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 105, and William B. Hamilton, "The Southwestern Frontier, 1795-1817: An Essay in Social History," Journal of Southern History 10 (1944), 402.

5. May Wilson McBee, comp. The Natchez Court Records, 1767-1805: Abstracts of Early Records (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 264-65.

6. During the first sixth months of 1801, according to one report, 450 flatboats, 26 keelboats, 2 schooners, 1 brigantine, and 7 pirogues all from the Ohio Valley, checked in at customs at the Spanish border, then at Loftus Heights below Natchez. Total cargo included: 93,000 bls. flour; 882 hhds. tobacco; 57,900 lbs. pig lead; 22,800 lbs. hemp; 57,600 lbs. bacon; 43 bls. beef; 196,000 lbs. cordage; 565 bls. whiskey. See John W. Monette, "Progress of Navigation and Commerce on the Waters of the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes, A. D. 1700 to 1846," Mississippi Historical Society Publications 7 (1903), 487. For other examples of Kentucky flatboats and their cargoes see: Dorothy Williams Potter, Passports of Southeastern Pioneers 1770-1832 (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1982), pp. 23-24, and McBee, Natchez Court Records, pp. 149, 258. Richard C. Arena, "Philadelphia-Spanish New Orleans Trade in the 1790s," Louisiana History 2 (Fall 1961): 429-45.

While some farmers near the Bayou Pierre planted tobacco, the local economy of the Big Black had yet to develop to the point where staple agriculture was viable. In 1789, the Bayou Pierre region produced 97,000 lbs of tobacco, less than a third produced by the Cole's Creek region near Natchez. Individual producers are listed, but none of the Big Black families appears. Laurence Kinnaid, ed. Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794, part 2, Post War Decade, 1782-1791, 3 vols., Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945, vols. 2-4 (Washington, D.C., 1946, 1949), 3:310. Tobacco was also one of the crops reported by the Spanish Census of 1792, but by that time few Bayou Pierre households planted any at all, the total crop amounting to only a few thousand pounds. Apparently by then competition from Kentucky producers had taken its toll.

7. P. C. Henlein, Cattle Kingdom in the Ohio Valley 1783-1860 (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), pp. 154-57.

8. A partial tax roll for 1803, listing the property of 28 taxpayers residing from the Big Black to the Walnut Hills, shows 1 person with a herd of 100 head of cattle, and two people with herds of 200 head. In 1805 the largest herd

assessed by for taxes numbered 250 head. Claiborne County Tax Roll, 1803, Delinquents, and Claiborne County Tax Roll, 1805, Claiborne County Records (microfilm), MDAH.

Nineteen probate inventories made between 1794 and 1810 showed herds ranging in size from 5 to 150 head, with the mean numbering 42 head.

By comparison, when the Spanish took a census in 1792 (see "Spanish Census of the Natchez District, 1792," MDAH) just as the building of Fort Nogales had begun, the largest herd on the Big Black numbered only 20 head. When the households of nearby Bayou Pierre are included, one of which contained 100 steers, the mean herd size numbered only 14 head, a third the size of the mean herd a decade or so later.

In contrast, the largest drove of hogs counted by the 1792 census numbered 150, and another contained only 10 fewer, while the inventories taken during the next decade show none with as many as 100 hogs. The mean size of hog droves for the later period, however, was nearly 20 hogs larger, reflecting the growth of slavery and the need for larger droves to meat household requirements.

9. Wherever populations are sparse, rural people tend to rely more on herding than planting. Livestock raising, therefore, is typical of sparsely settled frontier regions, but gives way to agriculture as population increases. For a discussion of this process as it occurred in the nineteenth-century South see: John Solomon Otto, "Southern 'Plain Folk' Agriculture: A Reconsideration," Plantation Societies in the Americas 2 (1983): 29-36. For places outside the United States where the same relationship between land, labor, and livestock has occurred, see: Arnold Strickon, "The Euro-American Ranching Complex," in Man, Culture, and Animals: The Role of Animals in Human Ecological Adjustments, Anthony Leeds and Andrew P. Vayda, eds., pp. 229-258, American Association for the Advancement of Science, publication no. 78 (Washington, D.C., 1965); J. S. Otto and N. E. Anderson, "Cattle Ranching in the Venezuelan Llano and the Florida Flatwoods: A Problem in Comparative History," Comparative Studies of Society and History 28 (October 1986), 672-683.

10. Henlein, Cattle Kingdom, p. 43.

11. Hilliard conservatively estimates the annual yield for cattle herds in the antebellum South at twenty percent, that is twenty marketable steers every year from a herd of one hundred. Sam B. Hilliard, Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), pp.128-29.

12. Five dollars per head is a low estimate. In 1796, an inventory reported a price of six Spanish dollars. In 1811 a deed of sale reported the same price, only in U.S. dollars. See inventory of Gabriel Griffin, 1796, Natchez Court Records, vol. C, p.395, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, MDAH; and Deed Book A, pp.42-44, WCC.

13. In particular, see Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald, "Celtic Origins of Southern Herding Practices," Journal of Southern History 51 (May 1985): 165-182, and McDonald and McWhiney, "The South from Self-Sufficiency to Peonage: An Interpretation," American Historical Review 85 (December 1980): 1095-1118. While few historians accept the thesis of Celtic origins as whole-heartedly as McDonald and McWhiney, most see the spread of southern herding practices as a process of cultural diffusion from the backcountry of Pennsylvania and Virginia across the South as plain folk followed the frontier. See, for example, Frank L. Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965), 23-50; John Solomon Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis," Journal of Southern History 51 (1985): 183-200. Otto, however, does stress the importance of local conditions, to which cattle herding practices were adaptations, over cultural heritage. See Otto and Anderson, "Cattle Ranching in the Venezuelan Llanos and the Florida Flatwoods."

14. McBee, Natchez Court Records, p. 286. Jack D. L. Holmes, Gayoso: The Life of a Spanish Governor in the Mississippi Valley, 1789-1799 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), p. 100.

15. Rapalje Account Book, typescript, MDAH; American State Papers, 1:775-824; Plat Book of original landholders, Chancery Clerk's Office, Warren County Courthouse, Vicksburg; McBee, Natchez Court Records, p. 438.

16. Thomas Ashe, Travels in America Performed in 1806, for the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and ascertaining the Produce and Condition of Their Banks and Vicinity (London: R. Phillips, 1808), p. 315.

17. Rodney, "Natchez Region," 45:51; Francis Baily, Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America, in 1796 & 1797 (London: Baily Brothers, 1856), p. 147; Zadock Cramer, The Navigator, 8th edition (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966 [1814]), p. 312.

18. J. H. Ingraham, The South-West By a Yankee 2 vols. (New York: Negro University Press, 1968 [1835]), 2:169; Besancon's Annual Register of the State of Mississippi for

the Year 1838 (Natchez: L. A. Besancon, 1838), p. 207; United States Census Office, Compendium of the Sixth Census (Washington, D. C.: T. Allen, 1841), p.228. The census figure was calculated by assuming the average bale weighed 500 pounds, as the census only reported total pounds. In 1840, Adams County (Natchez) produced over 40,000 bales of cotton.

19. John Q. Anderson, "The Narrative of John Hutchins," Journal of Mississippi History 20 (January 1858), 5.

20. On 1 acre of new land a good farmer could have raised perhaps as much as 50 bushels. At \$.50 per bushel his crop would have brought him \$25. The same farmer could have worked .59 acres of cotton (cotton required 70% more labor per acre than did corn), which at \$.20 per pound would have brought him \$47.20.

On the labor requirements of cotton versus corn, see: Robert William Fogel, Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), pp. 71.

21. Gavin Wright first argued the importance of risk as a factor considered by farmers when they decided whether or not to plant cotton instead of corn. Wright's study of households and markets in the antebellum South, which found that the owners of small farms with little property showed a lesser interest than wealthier planters in the production of cotton for market but a greater desire to maintain a level of subsistence production, seems to suggest that the risk thesis has some validity. See Wright, The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 62-74; Wright and Howard Kunreuther, "Cotton, Corn and Risk in the Nineteenth Century," Journal of Economic History 35 (September 1975), 526-551. For an alternative view, see: Robert McGuire and Robert Higgs, "Cotton, Corn, and Risk in the Nineteenth Century: Another View," Explorations in Economic History 14 (April 1977), 167-182, but be sure to see the reply by Wright and Kunreuther, pp. 183-195 of the same issue. McGuire tests his hypotheses in "A Portfolio Analysis of Crop Diversification and Risk in the Cotton South," Explorations in Economic History 17 (October 1980), 342-371.

More recently, David Freeman Weiman has suggested the limits of Wright's "risk" and "safety first" model by pointing out that more than levels of personal wealthholding determined the extent to which farmers were likely to produce cotton for market. Regardless of the number of acres or slaves one owned, Freeman argues, one was less likely to plant cotton, and more likely to concentrate on raising a subsistence of corn, where distance and lack of means of

transportation kept markets relatively inaccessible. Conversely, where markets were easily accessible, small farmers were more likely than even planters to neglect subsistence production because they were most in need of capital necessary to take full advantage of opportunities presented by the cotton market. "Thus, the variations in the crop-mix among producers manifest the need to accumulate wealth and not only the actual level of wealth." See Weiman, "Petty Commodity Production in the Cotton South: Upcountry Farmers in the Georgia Cotton Economy, 1840 to 1880," Ph.D. dissertation (Stanford University 1983), 25-51, quotation from p. 45.

22. When Wright tested his model he found that his independent variables (available acreage, population per improved acre, value of the farm operator's personal property) accounted for only ten percent of the variance in the fraction of tilled acreage planted in cotton. While his regression coefficients were significant, the low R^2 leaves a lot of room for other possible accounts of the variation in crop choice. Wright, Political Economy of the Cotton South, pp. 67-68.

23. McBee, Natchez Court Records, p.286. According to Benjamin L. C. Wailes, virtually all households grew some cotton for home use. Benjamin Leonard Covington Wailes, Report on Agriculture and Geology of Mississippi (Philadelphia: Lippincott and Grambo, 1854), p. 131.

24. John Q Anderson, ed. "The Narrative of John Hutchins," Journal of Mississippi History 20 (January 1958), 3. Stephen Hymer and Stephen Resnick, "A Model of an Agrarian Economy with Non-Agricultural Activities," American Economic Review 49 (September 1969), 500. J. S. Otto and N. E. Anderson, "Slash-and-Burn Cultivation in the Highlands South: A Problem in Comparative Agricultural History," Comparative Studies in Social History 24 (January 1982), 131-147. Otto and Anderson explain slash-and-burn agriculture in the South as a product of the Celtic origins of many of its practitioners. But this explanation underestimates how widespread slash-and-burn agriculture was not only in the southern U.S. but in any place where population density is low and forests are abundant. On slash-and-burn more generally see: Marvin Harris, Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures, (New York: Vintage, 1978), pp. 135-136.

25. I do not mean to suggest that pioneering and backcountry farming was easy. But the worst difficulties came from forces beyond the control of individual people: disease, bad weather, Indian attacks. Moreover, much of the ruggedness of frontier living came from the lack of material comforts, not

from the any difficulty in meeting subsistence requirements. The ease with which wilderness land could be turned into something productive and valuable is precisely why it was settled so quickly.

On land clearing practices, see Nicholas P. Hardeman, Shucks, Shocks, and Hominy Blocks: Corn as a Way of Life in Pioneer America (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 51-58; Martin L. Primack, "Land Clearing Under Nineteenth-Century Techniques: Some Preliminary Calculations," Journal of Economic History 22 (December 1962), 484-497, estimates that five acres per year was the extent of forest cleared by one family. Primack, however, bases his estimates on the time and labor required to clear a field completely, including stumps, which pioneer farmers did not do because such a task was not only demanding, but unnecessary.

According to Lewis C. Gray, one hand could work six acres of corn and ten of cotton: Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 2 vols. (Washington, D. C.: Carnegies Institution, 1933) 2:708. John Solomon Otto claims that one man could tend twenty-five to thirty acres of corn, an estimate that seems rather high: Otto, "Migration of the Southern Plain Folk," p.194. Nicholas P. Hardeman offers a more reasonable estimate. Two bushels of seed planted ten pounds to the acre, provided a crop ample for a large family. At sixty pounds per bushel, that would mean twelve acres for a large family. See Hardeman, Shucks, Shocks, and Hominy Blocks, p. 71. For the weight of a bushel of corn, see William Drowne, Compendium of Agriculture, or the Farmer's Guide, in the Most Essential Parts of Husbandry and Gardening (Providence: Field and Maxcy, 1824), 262. In any case, with a yield of twenty-five bushels per acre, six or seven acres would have fed a small family. On average yields, see Gray, History of Agriculture, 2:816. Yields on new soil were, of course, much higher, and sometime reached one hundred bushels. Thirty bushels was reached easily without even plowing. See Hardeman, Shucks, Shocks, and Hominy Blocks, p. 64, and John T. Schiebecker, Whereby We Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607-1972 (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1975), 30. Moreover, corn planted in newly cleared land required little attention because weeds did not invade until at least the second season. Once corn stood knee high in the fields it required almost no attention until harvest. On seasonal labor demands of corn, see: Paul Gates, The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860 vol.3, The Economic History of the United States (White Plains, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1960), 170; Hardeman, Shucks, Shocks, and Hominy Blocks, p. 73. On consumption of corn by people and livestock, see Robert E. Gallman, "Self-Sufficiency in the Cotton Economy of the Antebellum South," Agricultural History 44 (January 1970):

10, 13. Gallman estimates one peck per person per week, or one bushel per person per month.

Cattle herds yielded twenty percent per year, while hog droves yielded forty-three percent: Hilliard, Hog Meat and Hoecake, pp. 104, 128-29. Hilliard's estimates are rough, but if anything they are too low. For example, he intentionally allows sows only one litter per year, while on established, well run farms, two litters were normal. Moreover, he estimates litter sizes at five, which was half the norm on intensively operated farms in England at about the same time. See John Lawrence, A General Treatise on Cattle, the Ox, the Sheep, and the Swine: Comprehending Their Breeding, Management, Improvement and Diseases (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1809), 429, 448. By contrast, the pig common on trans-Appalachian farms took longer to mature, yet was hardier, free of disease, and very prolific. For a description of the frontier pigs, see: H. G. Dawson, The Pig Book (Chicago, 1911), 34. Henlein estimates one hand per thirty head of cattle: Henlein, Cattle Kingdom, p. 43.

Prices of farm products and of consumer items are taken from the Rapalje Notebook, typescript, MDAH.

26. Wright, Political Economy, pp. 60-61. According to Ralph V. Anderson and Robert E. Gallman, work on food crops only occasionally interfered with demands of cotton cultivation, and "more commonly the crop schedules and labor demands of husbandry fit together, with the demand of no crop seriously slighted." See "Slaves as Fixed Capital: Slave Labor and Southern Economic Development," Journal of American History 64 (June 1977), 24-46, quotation from p. 37. However, there is some debate over exactly how much the seasonal labor demands of cotton and corn overlapped. Wieman, for example, argues that the two crops were quite competitive. See "Petty Commodity Production," pp. 31-32. According to Lewis Gray, "corn and cotton were largely competitive in their labor requirements." See Gray, History of Agriculture, 2:707. It seems unlikely that there could have been much conflict between the demands of the two crops. Except during the spring and early summer, when both required hoeing, there was little overlap. They were not planted at the same time; farmers planted cotton earlier. Once corn was knee high it could be left alone until harvest, which occurred at the farmer's leisure, even into the cold months of winter, allowing all attention to be devoted to the cotton crop. Only when intensively cultivated on poor or exhausted soils that required manuring and maximum control of weeds would labor demands have overlapped. These conditions did not exist in recently settled areas. See Gates, Farmer's Age, p. 170.

27. Gray, History of Agriculture, 2:708.

28. See Appendix C, Table C-1 and Table C-2.

29. The importance of leisure to southern small farmers and herders has been emphasized by: John Solomon Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk," and by Forrest McDonald and Grady McWhiney, "The South from Self-Sufficiency to Peonage." Although their emphasis on Celtic origins of southern life cannot be taken seriously, McDonald and McWhiney are correct to point out that there was more than a ring of truth to the numerous observations by northerners that southerners enjoyed an abundance of leisure time. See also Grady McWhiney, Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 38-50. David Bertelson discusses the long association of idleness with images of the South, in The Lazy South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Foreign observers, impressed by the high yield of corn, and by the fact that it could be cultivated by women and children, often associated that crop with idleness. See Hardeman, Shucks, Shocks, and Hominy Blocks, pp.35, 36.

As stated in note 22, I do not mean to suggest that pioneer homesteading required very little effort. Quite the contrary, its very demands made leisure all the more valuable.

30. Robert Fogel argues that this is precisely why slavery had to be so brutal, because it forced people to work not only for someone else, but also against their traditional notions of time, work, and leisure. Slavery, particularly the gang system, like machines in northern factories, violently disciplined workers who struggled against the demands of masters and bosses to work constantly. See Fogel, Without Consent of Contract, pp. 34-35. On pre-industrial work rhythms and concepts of time, see: E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," Past and Present no.38 (December 1967), 56-97. As Thompson points out, work patterns characterized by swings between intense labor and idleness, prevail among many self-employed people in modern societies, which suggests that these rhythms may be natural, that is, biological, rather than cultural. If such is that case, then they would be all the more resistant to change.

For a description of work cycles in a traditional rural setting, see: Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error, Barbara Bray, trans. (New York: George Braziller, 1978), 277-282.

31. One of the greatest problems landowners faced following the Civil War was getting freedmen to work. Where public lands and wild areas enabled blacks to hunt and gather a livelihood they showed no willingness to go back to picking cotton for their former masters. See: Eric Foner, Nothing

But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 88, 108; and Michael Wayne, The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 116. Whites after the war planted cotton willingly only if they had tenants to do the work: Louis Ferleger, "Self-Sufficiency and Rural Life on Southern Farms," Agricultural History 58 (July 1984), 314-329.

32. James A. Padgett, "A Decree For Louisiana Issued by the Baron of Carondelet, June 1, 1795," Louisiana Historical Quarterly 20 (July 1937), 590-605.

33. Rapalje Notebook, original copy, p. 78, typescript copy, pp. 7, 29, 31, 32, MDAH.

34. In the cattle ranching regions in the peripheries of another slaveholding society, colonial Brazil, much like in early Mississippi, slaves and free blacks were left largely unsupervised to tend the herd. Moreover, they were often permitted to keep a portion of the yearly increase. See: James Lockhard and Stuart B. Schwartz, Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 381-382.

35. Compare the Big Black community with the Sugar Creek community in Illinois a few decades later. Despite the presence of slavery in one and its almost total absence in the other, the two were very much alike in their cooperative use of scarce resources. John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 130-136.

36. On the backcountry economy and the extensive use of natural resources, see: John Solomon Otto, "Southern 'Plain Folk' Agriculture: A Reconsideration," Plantation Societies in the Americas 2 (1983), 29-36, and J.S. Otto and N.E. Anderson, "Slash-and-Burn Cultivation in the Highlands South: A Problem in Comparative Agricultural History," Comparative Studies in Social History 24 (January 1982), 131-147; Durwood Dunn, Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 23-45.

37. "Capitalism came in the first ships," is how Carl Degler succinctly expressed this view. See Degler, Out of Our Past: The Forces that Shaped Modern America 3d ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1984), 2-9. Other examples include: Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "Space, Time, Culture and the New Frontier," Agricultural History 38 (January 1964), 21-30; Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth 1607-1861: An Essay in Social Causation (New York: Harper

Torchbooks, 1968); Robert D. Mitchell, Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977). For this view as applied specifically to the antebellum South, see: Lewis C. Gray, The History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 2 vols. (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958); Avery Craven, Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1606-1860 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1926); Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York: Vintage Books, 1956); Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, Time On the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974); Peter A. Coclanis, Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country 1670-1920 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 48-110. On the southern yeomanry and small slaveholders as upwardly mobile capitalists, see James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York: Knopf, 1982).

38. This is a more recent view and builds on the work of Eugene D. Genovese, in particular, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South (New York: Vintage Books, 1967). Genovese, however, formulated many of his ideas after careful readings on the work of U. B. Phillips, in particular, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966). Most recently some historians have suggested that the South was at once capitalist and not capitalist. "In but not of the capitalist world" is how Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese now describe slavery in the Old South: Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 16. Morton Rothstein suggests that the South might best be understood as a dual economy: a capitalist plantation economy, and an underdeveloped, pre-capitalist backcountry economy. See: Rothstein, "The Antebellum South As a Dual Economy: A Tentative Hypothesis," Agricultural History 41 (October 1967), 373-382. Steven Hahn Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890 (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1983) is the first important study of the non-plantation South since Frank L. Owsley, Plain Folk of the Old South (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965 [1949]). Interestingly, both James Oakes, who in The Ruling Race emphasizes the capitalist nature of southern society, and Hahn, who emphasizes its pre-capitalist character, owe a great deal to Owsley's study of the plain folk. While Oakes develops Owsley's argument of mobility

between plain folk and planters, Hahn focuses on the distinction between the two groups. The end result is two interpretations very much at odds. See Hahn's review of Oakes: "Capitalists All!" Reviews in American History

Recent inquiries into the economic and social transformation of the northern countryside promise to reinvigorate discussion of cultural evolution in the South, provided they too do not get mired in a capitalist or non-capitalist tar pit. A bibliography of this literature begins with two articles almost always cited together, both of which stress the pre-capitalist nature of eighteenth-century America: Michael Merrill, "Cash in Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," Radical History Review No. 3 (1977), 42-71, and James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalite in Pre-Industrial America," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., 35 (1978), 3-32. For a sample of work influenced by this perspective, see: Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). Allan Kulikoff, "Migration and Cultural Diffusion in Early America, 1600-1860: A Review Essay" Historical Methods 19 (Fall, 1986): 153-169, and "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," William and Mary Quarterly 46 (January 1989), 120-144. Steven Hahn applies this view to the South in Roots of Southern Populism. The opposing view, one which emphasizes the commercial and capitalist characteristics of the rural economy is expressed most pointedly in a series of articles by Winifred B. Rothenberg, all published in the Journal of Economic History: "The Market and Massachusetts Farmers, 1750-1855," 41 (1981), 283-314; "The Emergence of a Capital Market in Rural Massachusetts, 1730-1838," 45 (1985), 781-808; "The Emergence of Farm Labor Markets and the Transformation of the Rural Economy: Massachusetts, 1750-1855," 48 (September, 1988), 537-566. Also see her review of the Hahn and Prude volume cited above: "The Bound Prometheus," Reviews in American History 15 (December 1987), 628-637.

39. Anthropologists have found that the spread of capitalism in the third world depends very much on the capital generating ability of non-capitalist modes of production. Thus, during the period of transition to capitalism, pre-capitalist and capitalist economies live off each other, or in the parlance of economic anthropology, they articulate. See, for example, Rodriguez O. Rodriguez, "Original Accumulation, Capitalism, and Precapitalistic Agriculture in Bolivia," Lillian Manzor Coats and Dianne Tritica Robman, trans., Latin American Perspectives 7 (Fall 1980), 50-66. Historians of early Latin America are reaching similar conclusions. See for example, Steve Stern, "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin

America and the Caribbean," American Historical Review 93 (October 1988), 829-872.

40. Fabel, Economy of British North America, p. 158.

41. Lorenzo Dow, Vicissitudes in the Wilderness: Exemplified, in the Journal of Peggy Dow (Norwich, Conn.: W. Faulkner, 1833), 33-52.

42. Phelps, Memoirs and Adventures, pp. 29-30.

43. Inventory of the Property of the late Jacques Rapalje, 1797, vol.G, p. 289, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, MDAH.

44. McBee, Natchez Court Records, pp. 88, 96, 198, 324, 346, 388, 426; Lowrie, ed. American State Papers, 1:562-63; Spanish Census, 1792, MDAH; Claiborne County Tax Roll, 1805, Claiborne County Records, MDAH; John Pope, "A Tour," p. 28.

45. My ideas about the importance of a metropolitan cultural influence of countryside consumers has been influenced by the work of Stephen Gudeman on contemporary Colombia. In his study of the capitalist transformation of the Colombian countryside Gudeman emphasizes the importance of "market pull" on subsistence oriented peasant communities. "Rural dwellers, defining themselves as Panamanians of low social and economic position, are," according to Gudeman, "receptive to those elements and symbols of modern life which characterize the metropolitans." "Peasants want very much to partake of consumer goods--'civilization'--but do not want to sell their subsistence crops for cash." Staple agriculture, however, "provided the long-awaited opportunity for participating in civilization." Agricultural transformation from subsistence to staple production, as Gudeman sees it, "is both a radical and a non-radical shift." Gudeman, The Demise of a Rural Economy: From Subsistence to Capitalism in a Latin American Village (Boston, London, and Henley: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1978), quotation from pp. 21, 31, 131.

Little has been written on consumption in the nineteenth-century South, but for suggestions of its importance in motivating behavior, see Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman's study of colonial Middlesex County, Virginia. The Rutmans found rising levels of consumption of items that might be classified as luxuries, at least to the extent that they did not contribute to production but only made life more comfortable, to have been an important aspect of the development of slavery in the colonial Chesapeake. Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia 1650-1750 2 vols. (New York and London: W. Norton, 1984) 1:188-195.

46. Lacy K. Ford, Jr., found that Upcountry South Carolina farmers did not have to neglect foodstuffs when they took up cotton planting, and that cotton even became, for many farmers, a way of maintaining self-sufficiency and independence from the market and from creditors. See: Ford, "Self-Sufficiency, Cotton, and Economic Development in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860," Journal of Economic History 45 (1985), 260-267, and Ford, Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 44-84.

47. Lawrence Kinnaird, ed., Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 3 vols., Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945, Volume 3, Problems of Frontier Defense, 1792-1794 (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), pp. xvi-xvii, 280-282, 285, 310.

48. Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, vol. IV, Jan. 1792-June 1793, pp.225-227, RG 26, MF33, MDAH; Despatches of the Spanish Governors of Louisiana, Messages of Francisco Luis Hector, El Baron de Carondelet, Sixth Spanish Governor of Louisiana, Book II, Gayoso to Carondelet, Nov. 10, 1792, pp. 168-171, Special Collections, John C. Pace Library, UWF; Dunbar Rowland, ed. The Mississippi Territorial Archives, 1798-1803 vol. 1 Executive Journals of Governor Winthrop Sargent and Governor William Charles Cole Claiborne (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1905), 1:226, 458. Arthur De Rosier, Removal of the Choctaw Indians (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1983).

49. As early as 1813, there were reports of exhausted and eroded soil in the vicinity of Natchez. See Hamilton, "Mississippi 1817," p. 286.

CHAPTER 4
RELATIONS WITHIN HOUSEHOLDS:
WHITE FAMILIES

To an old farmer leaning on his hoe as he surveyed his fields and reflecting on the past quarter century since his arrival just before the Spaniards' departure, the changes in the land around him would have been obvious. Cotton fields had replaced much of the forest and pasture. The fields themselves were much larger than the corn plots cultivated in earlier days. Between the rows once worked by a white family moved gangs of black slaves. Not that there were fewer whites than there used to be. There were plenty of newcomers, and plenty more arriving every year. Some brought slaves in great numbers and cut down trees, destroying the forest where in earlier days the old farmer had let his hogs and cattle wander. But it was not only the newcomers who had changed the land, the farmer would have mused. Some of the people who had pioneered just like him owned slaves and planted cotton, too. The old days were gone. Life was different now.

Warren County changed dramatically over the short space of a lifetime, or at least on the surface so it would seem

to the historian as well as to the contemporary observer. Population grew rapidly from two hundred people at the beginning of the century to over seven thousand by the end of the third decade. Once situated at the end of the world, the county was only an easy steamboat ride from New Orleans. The wares of merchants, once practically out of reach, filled the shops that lined the street of the county's two towns. Less perceptible, however, to historians, and perhaps to early nineteenth-century Mississippians too, were the often subtle and profound changes that occurred in relations between people, changes connected to more obvious material transformations. This chapter examines relations within rural households.

Changes within northern households during the century after the Revolution are better understood than those in the South, although many questions remain unanswered for both regions. The combined work of recent historians, particularly of those whose focus has been on women, points to significant regional differences. In pre-industrial America, North and South, households functioned as the basic unit of production and reproduction. Despite a gender division of labor--the men working primarily in the fields tending crops and watching cattle while the women worked closer to the home, preparing food, feeding chickens, making candles, spinning flax, and stitching clothes--there was considerable overlapping. Wives helped their husbands during

periods in the agricultural cycle that demanded extra labor; husbands took over certain tasks when their wives were ill. Most importantly, despite these divisions, the household was essentially a corporate enterprise, an economic whole. Both men and women worked at home, and both made vital contributions to the production process that enabled the household to survive.

The extension of the market into the countryside and the advent of factory production, however, altered this arrangement in certain regions of the North, New England in particular, breaking the corporate household into its individual parts, men and women each with their own separate tasks and responsibilities. Farm households in that region increasingly marketed surplus agricultural products and purchased many of the items they formerly made themselves. With the extension of the market into rural households, in the form of factory goods, women contributed to domestic economy in new ways, primarily as consumers rather than as producers. The productive burden within the household shifted to the men, who raised the marketable crop. Their wives and daughters purchased many of items such as linens and clothes that they formerly spun and wove themselves. Only where the market provided the opportunity to sell products traditionally made by women did housewives continue in a productive capacity. In the vicinity of Philadelphia, for example, farm women churned butter for a large urban

market. In urban areas production was removed entirely from the household, dramatically altering relations between men and women, especially within the growing number of middle class homes. As sole income earners, men worked entirely outside of the home. Women remained at home where they became consumers instead of producers, contributing less to household income and more toward child-rearing and housekeeping, making the home a comfortable, secure, and rather separate haven from the outside world, a moral sanctuary into which their men could retire at the end of the day, in which their children could mature untouched by the outside world, and hence incorruptible. In short, allowing for variation, the general pattern of household change in the North after the Revolution entailed the removal of manufacturing from the home to the factory, and a split between the income earning responsibilities of men and the moral burden of women.¹

The South, historical literature tells us, was different. Overwhelmingly rural and agricultural, the region's households did not experience the transformation that swept the northeast, but remained steadfast to pre-modern social arrangements. Despite growing consumerism, paid for by staple crops, southern men and women continued to produce, rather than purchase, much of what they needed and wanted. More significantly, men worked at home, where they remained the head of a corporate household. While

releasing whites from most of the burdens of working, slavery nevertheless perpetuated the survival of a pre-modern household. Masters strived to keep their slaves busy all the time. Between agricultural cycles they put them to work making shoes, clothes, and any other products that could be made and used on the plantation. As a consequence, demand for manufactures other than implements and luxuries remained low, retarding market development and further contributing to the tendency toward self-sufficiency. While acknowledging variations between slaveholding and nonslaveholding households, historians insist they were minimal compared to the differences between a dynamic, modernizing North and a static, traditional South.²

The comparison of South to North provides only an incomplete picture, for temporal and spacial variations in household composition and function were as great within as between the two sections of the country. In Warren County the growth of slavery and staple agriculture enlarged households, changed their racial composition, and altered relations between its members. In nonslaveholding homes women provided essential labor and skills; they contributed to the productive capacity of the household. When slaves relieved white mistresses of these responsibilities women's relationships with male household heads changed. At the same time, slavery enhanced the patriarchal power over all other household members. Moreover, with larger slaveholdings came

an increase in the social distance between masters and servants. Overall, as private wealthholdings increased and resources diminished, households evolved from relatively simple social units organized mainly for production to more complex arrangements that also functioned to preserve and transmit property and status. Paternalistic notions of family, gender, and slavery followed this material and social change.

The term "household" is open to different definitions, but for purposes here it is applied to the people who lived and worked together in single productive and reproductive units. It is not the same as "family," which implies a biological or conjugal connection between its members. Of course, the two frequently overlapped. Some households may have been primarily a productive rather than reproductive unit, as in single person homes for example, while others may have served a more reproductive function, as in urban middle-class households in the nineteenth-century North. Usually, however, they provided both functions. Such was the case in the antebellum South. Lastly, households of Warren County operated as single enterprises. Thus, a slave plantation was one household, while a plantation worked by tenants who after paying a rent to the landowner ran their operations separately and individually was a collection of households.³

The changing character of the household in Warren County is evident in the balance between its two basic human components: the nuclear white family, and the slaves. In general, there was a shift from the simple to the more complex, from nuclear family households to homes inhabited by extended kin, or even, unrelated whites, and by blacks, who on large plantations lived as separate families. Whereas the early settlers lived in units consisting of one or two parents and their children, by the 1850s households often contained several families of different color and status.⁴

Although the size of the nuclear family remained constant, the actual number of whites in each household grew from five to seven persons over the first five decades of the nineteenth century. Moreover, as a percentage of total households, those in which whites formed a nuclear family declined steadily, as did the percentage of whites who lived in nuclear family households. In the years before 1810 the white household members typically consisted of a mother, father, and children, whereas later they included more distant relations or non-family members.⁵

The first settlers in the Warren County area usually arrived in nuclear family groups, although single men came, as well. In a lop-sided sex ratio their presence reflected a demographic pattern typical of newly settled areas. In 1800 adult men outnumbered adult women by a ratio of three to two.⁶ Nevertheless, single men soon married, taking brides

several years younger than themselves.⁷ Both the predominance of nuclear family households, and the haste with which people married, attest to the importance of marriage and family to homesteading.⁸

Women were in great demand. In a letter written to a single lady in New York, perhaps a widowed sister--the addressee is not indicated--Jacques Rapalje tried to persuade his correspondent to come to Mississippi: "I can assure you that wrinkles or a small stoop in the shoulders nay even grey hairs are no objection to the making new conquest here if you will transplant yourself a few months in the Clime[. A] woman till five and thirty [is] only looked upon as a raw girl[. T]his is a paradise for you." For young farmers a wife was an essential partner and laborer. James Smith claimed his marriage to Sarah Phips "was a marriage of love," and it might well have been. But when business affairs took him from home Sarah took his place in the fields, and she probably worked beside him during the crucial planting and harvest weeks. Another woman worked on her husband's farm in New York for a number of years before they moved to the Bayou Pierre where they hacked a farm out of a cane brake and tried to build a mill. The husband, a poor farmer with little business sense, struggled constantly, but failed finally after his wife abandoned him. He barely made ends meet when they lived

together; the farm and mill stood no chance of succeeding after she left.⁹

Women, however, did not spend most of their time in the fields. They tended hogs and chickens, prepared food, and manufactured items for use in the home--stitching clothes, molding candles, churning butter--and thus enabled the household to achieve a greater degree of self-sufficiency, which in turn reduced the burden of the men who did work in the fields. John Hutchins how his father worked the fields and bought and sold flour, but the family was clothed in homespun "made by our mothers and sisters from the spinning wheel and loom."¹⁰ Single men had little choice but to raise a crop primarily for the market because they needed to purchase what a wife could have made at home. Married men had more options. Although they produced for a market, too, they were not compelled to do so, at least not to the same extent. Just as raising a subsistence in corn provided farmers with security in the event of disaster by contributing to the household's cushion of subsistence, domestic manufacturing helped ease farms into the commercial economy. In short, marriage made good sense, at least from the perspective of the man. A skillful housewife reduced the stakes riding on his crop. Therefore, domestic production did not necessarily forestall market development, and may actually have encouraged it by allowing households to engage in commercial agriculture at their own pace, at their own

choosing, based on their judgements of what the market did or did not have to offer. Producing a crop for market was a gamble, but the best gambles were always those one could afford to lose.¹¹

Evidence of home manufacturing can be found in the earliest surviving estate inventories: lists of looms, spinning wheels and cards provide the best indicators. But these households were not isolated or subsistence enterprises. Six out of ten raised herds of cattle for market. All but one had at least one slave. More importantly, they were the households poised to take advantage of the cotton market when its opportunities materialized. Some were doing so already. Women continued to spin and weave even as their husbands sold more agricultural produce and purchased more tools and luxuries. In 1810, in the midst of a local cotton boom, Warren County households continued to produce a sufficiency, or close to it, in cotton cloth. A decade later, women from some of the wealthiest cotton planting families still spun and wove. Of the thirty farm households inventoried between 1818 and 1824, eighteen contained thread- or cloth-making equipment. Moreover, the total value of these inventories was greater on average than that of the remaining inventories by over twenty percent. Appraisers listed spinning wheels and homespun along with such luxuries as sugar dishes, cream pitchers, cups and saucers, silver watches, and silver

spoons. Five inventories also mentioned notes of hand drawn on neighbors as well as merchants, further indicating the commercial nature of the farm household enterprises.¹²

On occasion women produced specifically for the market. They or their husbands sold the products of their labor. For example, during the brief period when Warren County farmers began planting cotton, but before merchants set up shop and opened their doors for business, there seems to have flourished a local trade in cotton cloth. About fifteen or twenty families clustered on the banks of the Mississippi River, at a place they named Palmyra, raised "great

TABLE 4-1

Number and Percent of Probate Inventories with Selected Items, by Households with and without Spinning and Weaving Equipment

	With		Without	
	no.	%	no.	%
Slaves	12	67	9	75
Cotton (over 500 lbs., clean)	4	22	1	8
Corn (over 100 bu.)	5	28	1	8
Cattle (10 or more head)	11	61	6	50
Smoothing irons	9	50	1	8
Looking glasses	10	56	3	25
Clocks and watches	3	17	0	0
Silverware	2	11	0	0
Notes in hand	5	28	1	8
Number of inventories	18		12	
Av. total value	\$3905		\$3210	

Source: Warren County Orphans' Court, Minutes Book A, 1818-1824, OCM. Seven inventories given in the minutes book were excluded from analysis, as they clearly did not belong to a farm or even a working household. One, for example, contained mostly law books.

quantities of cotton,"and made "some portion of it into thread, which they manufacture into cotton cloth, and sell for a dollar per yard." At the same time they continued to cultivate "such provisions as are necessary for their own consumption."¹³

On the whole, however, housewives worked to maintain the self-sufficient farm household, or at least a household as nearly self-sufficient as possible, so that the husband could respond to the market with more freedom. In other words, within the home production for use articulated with production for exchange. In a sense marriage bound more than two people. It provided a basis for a union of two economies, each distinguishable from the other according to how the products were used, as objects for immediate consumption versus commodities for sale, and each clearly divided by gender. But as a strategy for farming, for providing household members with basic needs, as well as with consumer goods and a few luxuries, the two were indistinguishable.¹⁴

The economic patterns of men and women, discernible if not separate, extended outside the household in the form of the local networks of exchange discussed in chapter two. As the primary producers of items for use, women traded goods for use, not profit--a cup of sugar lent to one neighbor, a sack of coffee borrowed from another, with never a mention

of monetary value. Men, who took much of what they produced to market, participated in a different circle of exchanges, giving a value to everything, and expecting at least a small profit. But the exchange patterns of men and women were mutually supportive, and, like their respective roles in the production process, together formed a domestic economy organized to reproduce, or improve, the material circumstances of the household.¹⁵

Relations within the domestic sphere were also organized to reproduce the white family. A young population seeking to make a living by independent means, and a high ratio of men to women, both characteristics of recently settled regions, guaranteed a high rate of family formation and childrearing. To the housewife fell the dangers of giving birth and the burdens of tending young children. Married at nineteen, a woman could expect to see her forty-seventh birthday, but was not likely to see any more. And during those years following marriage, virtually all her adult life, she would always have three or more children at her feet.¹⁶ Elizabeth Clark, for example, married Newit Vick in Virginia shortly before her twentieth birthday. She gave birth to two children before the couple left to make a new home in Jefferson County, Mississippi. There she had three or four more. When they moved to Warren County, with a large family already, including a son in his early twenties, the couple continued having children. In 1819 Elizabeth and her

husband died of yellow fever, leaving nine sons and daughters, plus an infant less than a year old.¹⁷

Elizabeth Clark Vick's experience was exceptional, less so because of the number of children she bore than because she lived with one man continuously for nearly thirty years. Death and widowhood gave reprieve from childbearing, if only temporarily, to other women. Vianna Smithheart married Lewis Dyer when she was only seventeen years old. Dyer, however, died before they had any children. Vianna waited several years before marrying again, and at the age of twenty seven gave birth to her first child. She had three more before she was widowed again. Despite being married at a young age, Vianna Smithheart spent nearly half her childbearing years as a widow, and raised only four children.¹⁸

Spinning and weaving cotton was tedious work. Cutting and dressing meat could be exhausting. But giving birth was downright dangerous. Forty-six percent of all deaths among women over the age of fifteen occurred before they reached their thirty-first birthday. The comparable figure for men was thirty-three percent. The greatest number of deaths occurred around age twenty, a result of complications during the first birth, with risk decreasing with each child thereafter. Yet, despite the very real dangers of child birth, women continued to have several children. Although the fertility rate declined steadily over the first half of

the nineteenth century, it was always much higher in Warren County than in older areas of the country.¹⁹

The abundance of resources, land in particular, and the relative ease with which a family could be supported, meant that couples felt no pressure to limit the size of their families. If anything, low survival rates for newly born plus the advantages that children offered as they matured into workers would have made family limitation unnecessary. (While fear of pain and death from childbirth doubtless caused women to dread pregnancy, there is no evidence that they succeeded in reducing the frequency of childbirth.) Moreover, children left their parents' home in early adulthood to set up households of their own, sons perhaps waiting until they had land, and daughters leaving sooner, upon marriage. The short life expectancy of men and women meant that few lived into old age. As a consequence, multi-generational households were relatively few. The nuclear family was a constant in the Warren County household through the antebellum period. Nevertheless, it was a living entity that changed as its members passed through the life cycle.

In 1810, and at the young age of sixteen, Thomas Wright kept his own household. He owned two slaves, which he had probably inherited, but as yet had no land. How he earned a living is not known. Perhaps he squatted. More likely he leased acreage, or hired himself out as an overseer. Before ten years passed Thomas was married and the father of a

young boy. Another decade passed and Wright headed a nuclear family household with six children. Shortly thereafter his wife died. Thomas, however, quickly remarried, to Nancy Evans, thus re-establishing the two parent nuclear family, although in hybrid form. He and Nancy had no children together. Three years later Thomas died. The family unit now consisted of the children and their step-mother. By 1860 all but one of Thomas's heirs lived in households of their own. Now sixty-five years old, Nancy still lived on the family farm, although she and her unmarried step-daughter were joined in the household by kinsman William Rawls, his wife and seven children. The composition of people within the Wright farmhouse had nearly come full circle. Only Nancy's long life, and Eveline's spinsterhood, prevented a complete return of the nuclear family.²⁰

Table 4-2

Composition of Households Present Over Twenty Years

	1810	1820	1830
Number of nuclear family households	5	3	5
Number of single person households	5	0	1
Mean household size	4.5	7.3	5.2
Mean number of children	2.7	3.3	2.2

Number of households - 13

Sources: U.S. Census, Population Schedules, 1810, 1820, 1830. Children are people under 21 yrs. (1810), under 16 yrs. (1820), and under 15 yrs. (1830). The calculation of the mean number of children in 1810 is too high, and thus understates the increase in number of children between 1810 and 1820.

Thirteen of the household heads counted by the 1830 census had headed a household in Warren County for at least twenty years. Although their number is small, together they give an impression of the family life-cycle Table 4-2). In 1810 five people lived by themselves. Five more lived with a spouse and three or four children. The other three lived in non-nuclear family households. Within the thirteen households lived, on average, four or five people. Over the next ten years the composition of the households became more complex, or at least more difficult to identify. Only three appear to have been nuclear families, that is, one or two parents and children. The other ten households contained additional adults, most likely grown children, but perhaps also sons- or daughters-in-law. All, however, still had young children. Families continued to grow, and over the decade the average household size increased by three persons. After twenty years the cycle turned as the number of extra adults began to decline. Older children were leaving. Young children were fewer, indicating that the original family had peaked in size. Six of the household heads died within the next decade, and six others may have died also, for they disappeared from the record at this point. Only Catherine Hullums, the one woman in the group,

and a widow since before 1810, lived much longer, dying in 1852 at the age of eighty-two.

The combination of high birth rate and short life expectancy meant that mothers and fathers frequently died leaving young children in need of care. Moreover, orphans often inherited property, which surviving family members sought to keep, along with the minor heirs themselves, within the immediate family, or as close to it as possible. Orphans and their inheritances were not dispersed, however, if their relatives sought to keep family and property together. Demographic patterns often made it possible for them to do so. Families tended to be large enough, and so spread out in age, that by the time parents died their oldest children were, or would soon be, in a position to care for young brothers and sisters. If not, there was always a young uncle who could act as guardian.

When Wesley Mathis died he left two minors. Wesley Mathis, Jr., already married and with two children of his own, took his younger brother and sister as his legal wards.²¹ The heirs of Pharoah Knowland passed to several guardians, and were split up for a while, but neither they nor their property was removed very far from the immediate family. All were eventually reunited. When Knowland died his children remained in the custody of their mother. Upon her remarrying the children's uncle requested that he be made

their legal guardian, to prevent their property from falling into the hands of the stepfather. The court, however, decided to leave the children with their mother, although the oldest, William, being over fourteen years, was permitted to choose his own guardian. He chose his uncle. But William's uncle died within a year, so again he selected a guardian, this time a neighbor and associate of his deceased father, although apparently not a kinsman. When William turned twenty-one, the age of majority for men, he set up his own home, and requested and received the guardianship of his younger brother and sister. The children, and their property, were rejoined.²²

Despite short life expectancy and parental death, the nuclear family continued as the center of the household. Except during the first generation after the arrival of a new family, orphaned children did not typically end up in the care of strangers, or rarely with kin more distant than an uncle. There were too many close kin available to serve as guardians.²³ Therefore, within the home relations remained close, often no more than an immediate step from the household head. Nevertheless, the deaths of parents with young children had two consequences, both of which drew outsiders into affairs within the household and contributed to the rise of the Old South's variation on the extended paternalistic family. Each is discussed in more depth in a later chapter, but they are worth mentioning here.

First, as the Knowland family's experience shows, the question of guardianship was not always easily settled. Potential guardians sometimes disputed who would take custody of orphaned minors. In their desire to maintain possession of family property, families generally preferred a male guardian. But raising young children called for a woman. The only woman who could legally serve as guardian was a widowed mother. Thus, if both parents were dead then there was generally no problem. An older and married brother, or a married uncle, simply took the children and the estate into his household. While older brothers and uncles were known to challenge one another over the right to serve as guardian of young siblings, or nieces and nephews, more problems arose when a surviving mother remarried. The mother generally received custody of her deceased husband's, that is to say her own, children. She was the only woman who could receive legal control of the property of minors, so long as she remained a widow. If she married again, however, the new husband took legal control of the children's estate, children to whom he was seldom related, and an estate bestowed upon them by a dead man who had not intended it for strangers. At this point adult male kin usually stepped in and demanded custody of the children, and especially of the estate. The court then had to decide between the minors' personal interests, which were probably better served by leaving them in the care of their mother, and their

financial interests, which could be better protected by an uncle or brother rather than a step-father. Sometimes the decision split orphaned brothers and sisters, placing the youngest with the mother, the oldest with a male relative. Protracted legal battles only stirred feelings of bitterness between family members.

This is the pattern of events that occurred following the death of Stephen Gibson. His children stayed with their mother, even after she remarried to Patrick Sharkey, who then became the legal guardian of Stephen Gibson's heirs. James Gibson, however, challenged Sharkey in court. A cousin of the children, and the leader of this generation of the Gibson family, James believed it his right and duty to look after his deceased uncle's sons and daughters. But the suits and counter suits that followed really concerned the half dozen slaves Stephen Gibson had left his heirs, for with guardianship of the children came control of their property. James Gibson claimed the slaves as his, and took them from Sharkey's home. Sharkey then sued Gibson for slave stealing. Upon his acquittal Gibson sued Sharkey for liable. In the end the two men, with the court's assistance, settled the matter by placing the children and their slaves in the care of a third party.²⁴

Second: Perhaps the most important consequence of parental loss for the family was its effect on sibling relationships. Historians of the antebellum southern family

have mapped extended kin networks and explored relations between parents and children. But relations between sisters, and especially brothers were central to the lives of many southerners. When fathers died the oldest son assumed the role as family head, if not immediately then as soon as he came of age, and he continued in that capacity for the rest of his life. To his younger brothers and sisters he was not just another brother; he was also a father.

The Davis brothers offer an example. When old Sam Davis died he left ten children. The eldest, thirty-year-old Joseph, was a successful Natchez lawyer who had recently begun building a plantation on the river in the south end of Warren County. The youngest child, Jefferson, future president of the Confederacy, was only a boy of sixteen. Joseph immediately assumed the role of family head, and his new home became the family seat. Although most of the children were grown, they always turned to Joseph during time of need. When his sister Amanda was widowed, for example, she and her seven children moved into Hurricane, Joseph's plantation home, where the older brother could provide for her. Joseph's influence was greatest on young Jefferson, encouraging him to attend West Point, eventually settling him upon a section of his estate, and even arranging for the purchase of twenty slaves to get his brother started in the business of cotton planting. Joseph did not act solely out of fraternal obligation. Having never

given Jefferson his share of their father's estate he was truly indebted to him. But serving as trustee of his youngest brother's inheritance only emphasized his role as father figure. As neighbor, advisor, confidant, and senior business partner, he continued in that role until his death after the war.²⁵

While the nuclear family persisted as the central component of Warren County households, it was never immune to the natural course of the life cycle, early death in particular, which forced modifications. At the same time, certain demographic patterns, such as large family size, worked to sustain the nuclear family, or at least sustain the close relationship between immediate kin, even after they were grown and no longer living in the same home. Over time, however, the nuclear family became less an entity unto itself, and more an element in a larger extended kinship network that linked several households together. The single family remained the center of the household. But the context of life expanded from the family household to include the neighborhood of kin.

This change occurred for two reasons. The first was simply time itself. The tendency of children to marry and settle close to home turned rural neighborhoods of disconnected families into a mesh of kinship. Over time one acquired more aunts and uncles and cousins. However, in time more children suffered the loss of their father, a

consequence of an increase in the average age of men, which placed more of them at risk of dying. In addition parental death, as before, brought extended kin, male relations in particular, into the life of the nuclear family.

The second cause for change in family relations was the growing importance of maintaining and transmitting, rather than just producing, wealth, as resources, primarily land but also labor, became more scarce and expensive. The protection of property, and increasingly of the status, which gave individuals claim to property and authority, put a new edge on family relations, and on their relative positions of power. Demographic patterns made it possible for extended relations to involve themselves in the affairs of the nuclear family household. Concerns over property and status gave them a strong reason to do so. During the period from 1820 to 1850 in Warren County the extended paternalistic family increasingly became an arena for social and political interaction.

Kinship and neighborhood are the subjects of a later chapter, but the growth of paternalism clearly altered relations within the household, in particular relations between husbands and wives. Over the years from 1800 to 1860, as a direct result of demographic and economic forces, a crucial transformation occurred in the character of marriage and of women's place within the household. The home continued as the center of production and consumption. But

more than before it was the domain of the men who controlled its resources. At the same time, the power of women relative to men diminished in homes where slave labor, controlled by the patriarch, displaced them as producers and as economic assets to the household enterprise.

Domestic manufacturing initially gave households more freedom in choosing the extent of their involvement with the market. However, once the shift had been made to production for exchange rather than for use, the practicality of domestic manufacturing declined. Items such as cloth were easily purchased, and the quality of factory-made products tended to be better, as well. Moreover, as factory-made products came to represent improvement, progress, affluence, and higher status, fewer farmers were willing to wear the homespun that labelled them as bumpkins when they could afford better.

In 1810, Warren County farm households, that is, households with 3 or more acres, a standard set by the 1860 census, produced on average \$206 worth of cotton goods. By 1840 the average had fallen to only \$15, and not just for cotton products but for all household manufactures. By 1860 the average had risen to \$131 for all household manufactures, however, this did not reflect a return to production by housewives. Masters learned they could make better use of their slaves between agricultural cycles by putting them to work making such items as clothes and shoes.

Nevertheless, the figure remained well below the first per farm average.²⁶

Accounts of how Warren County women spent their days are scarce, but those that do exist suggest that plantation women by the late antebellum period contributed little to the household's productive enterprise. Ellen Hyland read and sewed while her husband was off in the fields supervising his slaves. "We have a tolerable good library though not a great variety of books." When he returned in the evening "we generally take a long stroll through the pasture William with his gun although the only game we start is rabbits." Tasks such as pickling and smoking were left to slaves, as was the cooking. "Our cook is very good for plain cooking or anything that she has ever attempted particularly cornbread and coffee." With little to do Ellen, an educated preacher's daughter, found life on her husband's plantation rather tedious. "There is nothing to interest you here," she wrote her sister, explaining why she had little to say in her letters, "the summer has been almost insufferably dull." "We are as dull as usual, the bustling world beyond us seems to be in a strange turmoil to us in our state of perfect quiescence." "I have not a single item of news as Bogue Desha," the plantation, "is unusually dull and devoid of interest." Other plantation women expressed the same sentiments. Carrie Kiger spent much of the year away from

home, visiting family and friends in New Orleans and Virginia. The plantation, she wrote, "is very lonely at times, but we try to be as cheerful and contented as possible, and I expect succeed better than many would, under the same circumstances."²⁷

As women became less important to the productive enterprise of the household, their power within the family diminished. This change in relations between husbands and wives is evident from the divorce cases filed between 1800 and 1860. Throughout this period there were unhappy marriages. What changed, however, was the means by which women freed themselves of a bad situation. Conditions during the early years gave them power over their circumstances that they very quickly lost. Women were always dependent on men, legally and actually. At least during the pioneer phase of settlement men depended on women, too, and on their labor in particular. Slavery, however, reduced the productive usefulness of women as a whole. At the same time, a balancing of the sex ratio reduced men's dependence on individual women.

Little has been written about divorce in the Old South, the general understanding being that it was too rare or exceptional to warrant investigation by historians interested in the more common experiences of southern men and women. This position is easily supported. One study of divorce based on suits brought before the supreme courts of

eight southern states over a period of sixty years uncovered only one hundred and nine cases.²⁸ There are indications, however, that divorce was more common than historians have supposed. In Warren County, for example, the court granted nineteen divorces during the nine years for which there are complete records. More important than the number of divorces, however, is the evidence the suits offer about relations between men and women.

Historians have focused only on the plaintiff and his or her treatment by the judicial system. This inevitably places all responsibility for divorce on the law and on the men who interpreted it. Thus, historian Jane Censer sees in divorce cases clear evidence of the sad lot of southern women, but concludes on a positive note, identifying in jurors a growing appreciation of southern womanhood and of their sense of responsibility to protect women who fit the ideal. Contrary to Censer, Wyatt-Brown sees in the courts no enlightened concern for suffering women, but only a consistent desire to protect male honor, which occasionally and quite secondarily meant rescuing a wife in distress.²⁹ Both, however, agree that women's fate rested with male authorities.

That the court offered women little chance of ending their marriage is clear. Although female plaintiffs enjoyed more success than male counterparts, the number of divorces was small and the grounds limited. Wife beating, for

example, was not legal cause for separation. Nevertheless, women were not always so dependent on either the law or the men who interpreted it as historians often suggest. Whenever they could they used what opportunity the law provided them in order to make the best of a bad situation. For example, filing suit for divorce was not the only way to end a marriage. An often misleading assumption holds that it was always the plaintiff who sought separation. However, if one wanted out of a marriage, one needed only provide legal justification, and then let his or her spouse take it from there. Thus, when examining divorce cases one must consider not simply the position of the plaintiff, or the decision of the judge; the action of the partner who precipitated the suit was crucial.

Legal grounds for divorce in Mississippi, as elsewhere, were bigamy, impotence, adultery, and desertion, the latter two being most common.³⁰ In the years before 1820 women who wished to dissolve their marriage simply ran off, usually with the assistance of third parties, men who stood up for them in court and to whom they sometimes remarried. Property law kept women dependent on men, but the imbalance in the sex ratio--the surplus of adult single males looking for a wife--enabled them to transfer that dependence to someone besides their husbands.³¹

Examples of wives deserting husbands abound. Although he eventually settled in Warren County, James Dromgoole

initially made a home for himself and his wife Frankey at Chickasaw Bluff, near present-day Memphis. In 1800 Dromgoole went to the Cumberland settlement in Kentucky on business, only to return to find that Frankey had sold his land and gone to the Mississippi Territory "where her conduct . . . has been very unbecoming, and incompatible with the Chastity of the Marriage State." Gabriel Osteen, in another example, had been settled in the Mississippi Territory only three weeks when his wife left him, he presumed with another man. When Osteen petitioned for divorce he had not seen her for over a year. A Bayou Pierre miller's marriage of twenty years ended when his wife ran to the Spanish territory with a young laborer who had been in his employ. He pleaded with his wife to return, promising to forgive her, but to no avail.³²

Husbands, of course, abandoned wives, too. In 1807 Eliza Jones and John Simpkins married on or near the Big Black River. By 1811 they had two children. In the fall of that year John left Eliza and moved to South Carolina where he married another woman by whom he had several children. Eliza, however, had no problem enlisting the assistance of another man. Represented in court by her "next friend" William Goodwin, she sought and received a divorce, then promptly married Goodwin. Richard Williams deserted his wife for another woman after ten years of marriage, leaving her in "needy & distressful circumstances." And Samuel Barkley,

within a month after marrying Elizabeth Glass, fled Mississippi with another woman, also leaving his wife in "needy & distressful circumstances." Elizabeth's situation was not so dire, however. She belonged to one of the most prominent families in the county, and her uncle, a planter who also happened to be sheriff, served as her "next friend." Divorce was granted in all these cases of desertion, whether initiated by the husband or the wife.³³

Women seemed quite as willing as men to take matters into their own hands, ending unhappy marriages by fleeing or taking up with another. Furthermore, the court played a rather passive role in the early divorce cases, merely acknowledging what the parties had already worked out themselves. There were no attempts by jurors to find absent mates; neither did they order couples to settle their differences without separation. They did not seem particularly interested in finding fault. Thus, marriages ended peaceably, or at least consensually.

After eight years of marriage Mary Blackman decided she had had enough. She left her husband and moved in with a neighbor, Samuel Cloyd, swearing never to return. Two years later her husband sued for divorce, which the court granted. Mary immediately married Cloyd and continued to live practically next door to her ex-husband. Another couple, William and Mary Lewis, also ended their marriage amicably. After a series of separations, each followed by a

reconciliation, Mary finally sued for divorce, claiming only verbal abuse. William argued in rebuttal that the marriage had foundered on his wife's "unhappy temper & disposition." There were no accusations of adultery. Neither abandoned the other. Indeed, there were no real legal grounds for divorce, except that William and Mary had decided the marriage was not going to work. The court agreed, and they each went their separate ways. In this case, Mary did not require the assistance of a third party. She had been a widow when she married William, and retained her dowry through her second marriage and after her divorce. With three thousand dollars, a horse, and a slave, Mary was quite independent.³⁴

By the end of the antebellum period, conditions had changed. Wives wishing to be free of their husbands took their chances in court, rather than running off. In the five years from 1857 to 1861, twelve women sued for divorce, of which ten were granted. Only five men sought an end to their marriage, and only three received one.³⁵ This is the pattern that historians have identified with the Old South, but it clearly differed from patterns that prevailed in an earlier period. Women increasingly sought redress in court, but not because judges were more open to them; they no longer had any alternative. Slavery rendered women as a whole less essential to the household enterprise, while a balancing in the sex ratio lowered their individual worth in the eyes of their men. Put simply, if harshly, individual women were

easily replaced, and their power in relations with men diminished accordingly. The court, however, mediated relations between husbands and wives to a greater degree, stepping in because they believed women were unable to solve their own problems. One case in particular shows the constraints on married women by the 1850s, and offers stark contrast to earlier divorces.

In 1824 Matilda Cox, seventeen year old daughter of a wealthy Natchez land speculator, married James Cotton, a young man of twenty-two. Little is known about James, except that he was poor. It is supposed that he must have been a handsome and charismatic lad, for he had none of the material charms that might explain his success in winning Matilda's hand. Whether the bride's father was quite so swept away is not known. In any case, there is no indication that he did anything to stop it. For the next fourteen years James struggled to support his family, which by 1835, when they first appear in the Warren County record, included three children. Three years later, about the time Matilda's mother died, James purchased a small farm, fully equipped, and including a couple of slaves. He had trouble meeting mortgage payments, and ultimately lost his field hands along with some personal property, but finally paid most of his debts after selling his in-laws' land in Adams County. Depleting the last of Matilda's resources, James purchased a slave, placing him out of the reach of creditors by putting

him in the name of his son Edward. James and Matilda continued to live on their farm, planting cotton, mostly, which they sold to pay off lingering debts, and to pay the rent on the slaves that worked the fields.³⁶

The 1840s were depression years, and James and Matilda never seemed to get ahead. Cotton prices remained low, yet James kept planting it. No one would loan him any money unless he did. He was not a good farmer. Nevertheless, many of his problems were not of his own doing. As will be discussed in a later chapter, opportunities for success for men with little or no property were disappearing. The once open society of economically mobile pioneer farmers was fast hardening along class lines. James seems not to have realized that the "flush times" were over. Nevertheless, he did not handle failure well at all, and that only made things worse for him and his family.

By the end of the decade James had given up farming for drinking. Still, he continued to rent slaves, a half dozen at a time, perhaps piling up debts once again, although there is some suggestion that a few neighbors and friends, concerned about the welfare of Matilda and the children, may have sent hands over to help out. In any case, James no longer cared; he frequently disappeared for long spells. "In relation to his working on the farm or in the field himself," son Edward remembered of his father during these years, "he done but little." Matilda now supported the

family, "and by her own personal labor." It seems that the more Matilda had to work the more James resented her. And the more James drank, the more Matilda resented him for reducing her to poverty. He had always been poor; she, however, had not. At this point, according to James, Matilda ceased allowing him "the privileges of a husband." He responded with violence.

According to Edward, James succumbed to severe spells of drunkenness and rage, on one occasion clubbing Matilda "with a stick, capable or sufficient to cause dangerous wounds or death!" He whipped her with a cowhide and "made attempts to cut her throat with a knife." He threw gunpowder into the fireplace next to where she sat, "the quantity of Powder being sufficient to occasion by explosion personal injury and damage." Once, James broke Matilda's arm as he threw her out the door. He "threatened to kill her when she was asleep, to blow up the House with Powder, using the worst kind of language when speaking to her," finally "compelling her to seek Protection from the Officers of the Law, from whom he fled, and remained away several Months."

But however much Matilda may have feared for her life, and justifiably so, it was not the violence that ultimately drove her to seek a divorce, but the loss of the farm. James, who by this time no longer lived with his family, sold all the land to a neighbor, leaving his wife homeless. With two children still in her care, Matilda refused to

surrender the house but continued to feed her family by working the small garden. The neighbor and new owner, one Benjamin Johnson, doubtless was aware of the woman's predicament, for he made no attempt to evict her. In an earlier time, before relations with her husband got so out of control, Matilda might have fled to the protection of a single man desiring a hard-working woman and companion. Now, however, she had to stay in the home. There was no where else to go. When she lost her home, desperate and alone, she could only throw herself on the mercy of the court.

The only legal ground for divorce in this case was James Cotton's extreme cruelty. Wife-beating was, of course, nothing new.³⁷ But so long as a woman could seek her own safety, she did not require the assistance of the law, and some of the women who deserted their husbands might well have fled in fear of their lives. The point is, that they were able to flee. After 1820 or so women no longer had much choice but to remain at home, no matter how bad their situation, and seek redress in the court. An act by the legislature extending divorce to cases of extreme cruelty was, in part, recognition of the changing situation in the home. But the new law allowed for only a partial divorce, what in legal parlance was called divorce a mensa et thoro--from bed and board--a separation that granted neither party the right to remarry.³⁸ Furthermore, judges resisted interfering in domestic affairs. "Family broils and

dissensions cannot be investigated before the tribunals of the country," wrote Mississippi High Court Justice Ellis in 1824, "without casting a shade over the character of those who are unfortunately engaged in the controversy. To screen from public reproach those who may be thus unhappily situated, let the husband be permitted to exercise the right of moderate chastisement, in cases of great emergency, and use salutary restraints in every case of misbehavior, without being subjected to vexatious prosecutions, resulting in the mutual discredit and shame of all parties concerned."³⁹

Despite a law that granted divorce in cases of extreme cruelty, however, Matilda could not simply show up before a judge, display her scars, and expect justice. She, or at least her lawyers, knew better. Much of her case rested on her being able to demonstrate that she had done all she could, and "by her own personal labor," as Edward stated, to keep the household enterprise going, while her spendthrift and drunken husband had not done "what he could or ought reasonably to have done, in order to provide for and support his family." In selling the farm James provided the proof Matilda needed. Reluctant to interfere in family affairs, there were nevertheless occasions, and this was one, when the court had to protect a woman and her family to prevent their becoming a burden to society. Conditions conspired to leave wives utterly dependent on their husbands, who,

accordingly, became their protectors. But paternalism sometimes went awry. When it did the legal authorities--other men--had to step in to set it right. In other words, the growing dependency of women on their men engendered a new understanding of the obligation of men to their dependents. James Cotton had failed in his obligation to Matilda; the court did not. On St. Valentine's Day in 1856 Matilda received her divorce a mensa et thoro. Word of the court's final decision arrived anticlimactically, however; James had died a few months earlier.

Women may have been dependent, but they were not helpless. Matilda Cotton adapted to her circumstances as best she could, in her case by manipulating the men. It is no coincidence that the testimony she used most effectively in making her case was that of her son Edward, a young man in his early twenties who understood the obligations of a husband and father, and who knew only too well how his father had failed. Matilda also benefitted from the judge's same sensitivity to the duties of honorable men, which probably won her the case despite a law that should have given her satisfaction on the basis of cruelty alone. For the real issue in this paternalistic culture that had settled on Warren County by the late antebellum period was honor, not cruelty. Honorable men sometimes beat their wives; they were not considered cruel. But James Cotton was not an honorable man. Matilda convinced the court of that

fact, and thus in the end saved herself by using her position of weakness to her best advantage.⁴⁰

On nonslaveholding farms, the head of the household controlled land, but not labor, which remained in large part if not entirely in the possession of the other adult members of his family. Both kinship and economic interdependence united the members of such households, at least while land was abundant and labor scarce. Sons could leave at a young age to set up their own homes, and they would want young women to join them. But as the population grew, and land became more scarce, the balance of power within the household shifted in favor of the landowner, and against family members whose labor became relatively less valuable. Slavery completed this transformation. On slaveholding farms, the head of the household controlled both land and labor, and was thus rendered economically independent of his wife and children, who became completely dependent on him. This was the basis of southern paternalism.

The process remained incomplete, however, in the majority of households that did not own slaves. Thus, paternalism, as both experience and ideal, was wrapped up in the process of class formation. Yeoman farmers and small slaveholders, men like James Cotton, found themselves held by court, community, and family to a paternalistic planter ideal that they had no hope of living up to without control

of the material underpinnings of that ideal. Those who succeeded in eventually moving into the planter class grasped that ideal firmly. Those who did not succeed, however, had to forge an alternative and competing system of values that reflected their experience. Or else, like James Cotton, they fell by the wayside--"selected out" is the term used by evolutionary biologists in describing what happens to species that fail to adapt to changing conditions--self-destructing in a flurry of drunkenness and brutality.

Notes

1. On northern farm households, see the survey by Richard L. Bushman, "Family Security in the Transition From Farm to City, 1750-1850," Journal of Family History 6 (1981), 238-52, and the citations therein. A more recent study is: Christopher Clark, Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). On women and life within the home, both real and ideal, see: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Goodwives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977); Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Joan Jensen, Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

2. The distinction between northern and southern households was drawn most recently by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Others have also made such a distinction, although their explanation for it differs from Fox-Genovese's. See: Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon, 1982); Jean E. Friedman, The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). For a more systematic look at the composition of southern households, see: Orville Vernon Burton, In My Father's House Are Many Mansions:

Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 104-147.

3. On the definitional problems of the household, see: Robert McC. Netting, Richard R. Wilk, and Eric J. Arnould, eds. Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1984), in particular, the first essay by the editors. They suggest that households are distinguished by five functions or activities that occur within them: production, distribution, transmission of resources, reproduction, and coresidence.

4. Warren County households, in other words, looked in the early years like rural households in the northwest. Over time, however, they began to look like households in older parts of the South. On farms in the northwest, which remained the homes of nuclear families through the antebellum years, see: John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 253 n10. Households in the southeast, however, very much more in composition, with slaveholders very likely to have extended family and non-family members. See Burton, In My Father's House, p. 109-114.

5. See Appendix D, Table D-1.

6. See Appendix D, Table D-2.

7. The average age at first marriage for men was twenty-six, while the average age for women was nineteen.

Thirty percent of Warren County resident married two years after they first appeared in the public record, which is the earliest indication of their presence. Over fifty percent married within four years. The source for these figures is the Study Data.

8. In later years men actually married at a younger age, while women married later. This pattern, however, reflected a balancing out of the sex ratio, and not a desire on the part of men to marry earlier. They doubtless would have married much earlier than they did in the early years, had there been more women available.

9. Rapalje Notebook, typescript, p.5, MDAH. May Wilson McBee, comp. The Natchez Court Records, 1767-1805: Abstracts of Early Records (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), pp.194-96. Lorenzo Dow, Vicissitudes in the Wilderness: Exemplified, in the Journal of Peggy Dow (Norwich, Conn.: W. Faulkner, 1833), pp.33-52.

10. John Q. Anderson, "The Narrative of John Hutchins," Journal of Mississippi History 20 (January 1958), p. 4.

11. For good descriptions of farm women and work, see: Ulrich, Goodwives, pp. 13-34; Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, pp. 36-56; Faragher, Sugar Creek, pp. 96-105. The best work on southern women remains Julia Cherry Spruill, Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies 2d ed., with an Introduction by Anne Firor Scott (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972).

12. Inventory of the estate of John Hartley, 1794, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Spanish Dominion, RG 26, microfilm, vol. C, pp. 90-91, MDAH; Inventory of the estate of Jacques Rapalje, 1795, *ibid.*, vol. G, p. 289; Inventory of the estate of Gabriel Griffing, 1796, *ibid.*, vol. C, 395-396. Tench Coxe, ed. A Statement of the Arts and Manufactures of the United States of America for the Year 1810 (Philadelphia: A. Cornman, 1814), section 3, p. 159. "Abstract from the Census of Manufacturing Establishment," Territorial Governor Records, Mississippi Territorial Census Returns, RG 2 microfilm 2, MDAH. Warren County Orphans' Court, Minutes Book A, 1818-1824, OCHM.

Joan Jensen, in her study of farm women in the Brandywine Valley of Pennsylvania, also found textile producing equipment located in the wealthier households. She claims the wealthiest households used the greatest amount of linen, and thus, had the greatest need of manufacturing it. I suggest that the reverse makes more sense, that because women could manufacture linen the household income could be spent on other items. See Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, pp. 49-50.

13. Thomas Ashe, Travels in America Performed in 1806, for the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and ascertaining the Produce and Condition of Their Banks and Vicinity (London: R. Phillips, 1808), p. 315. Christian schultz, Jr., Travels on an Inlands Voyage Through the States of New-York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, and Through the Territories of Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi and New-Orleans; Performed in the Years 1807 and 1808; Including a Tour of Nearly Six Thousand Miles 2 vols. (Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1968 [reprint of 1810 edition]), 2:128. Lewis Gray noted a pattern of local manufacturing and distribution of cotton cloth in areas across the South that were taking up cotton cultivation: Lewis C. Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1933).

14. "In the rural community," writes historian Nancy Osterud, who found a similar relationship between farm husbands and wives in the late-nineteenth-century Nanticoke Valley, New York, "the elements of conjunction between women and men outweighed those of disjunction." Nancy Grey Osterud, "She Helped Me Hay It as Good as a Man": Relations among Women and Men in an Agricultural Community," in "To Toil the Livelong Day": America's Women at Work, 1780-1980, pp. 87-87, Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds., (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 92.

15. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich also observed that farm women tended to exchange for use but did not participate in market exchanges, which were the reserve of men. However, Ulrich emphasizes the separateness of men's and women's activities more than the logic of the household, which is best understood as a single enterprise, will allow. Ulrich, "Housewife and Gadder: Themes of Self-sufficiency and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England," in "To Toil the Livelong Day", pp. 21-34, Groneman and Norton, eds.

That women were motivated largely by a desire to reproduce the standard of living and way of life of the members of the farm household is the general thrust of Jensen's, Loosening the Bonds, an argument that finds support here.

16. See Appendix E.

17. Study Data.

18. The examples of Elizabeth Clark and Vianna Smithheart are drawn from the family reconstitutions in the Study Data.

19. For example, the ratio of children under the age of 10 per 1000 women ages 16 through 45 was in 1850: 1204 in Warren County (and 1337 in the rural areas of the county), and 809 in Oneida County, New York. See Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 249.

20. Study Data.

21. Study Data.

22. Study Data.

23. In the colonial Chesapeake, a high death rate prevented formation of the stable nuclear family, and forced people to rely more on extended relations and neighbors. See: Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, "'Now-Wives and Sons-in-

Law': Parental Death in a Seventeenth-Century Virginia County," in The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society and Politics, pp.153-182, Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds. (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1979); Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia 1650-1750, 2 vols. (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1984), 1:113-120, 2:79-81.

24. Study Data. Robert Kenzer, in his study of kinship in a North Carolina county, argues that family ties mitigated conflict. Yet he assumes his conclusion from the mere existence of family ties, and never explores the relationships between family members. As the Gibson-Sharkey dispute demonstrates, kinship often bred conflict. See: Kenzer, Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987).

25. Frank Edgar Everett, Jr., Brierfield: Plantation Home of Jefferson Davis (Jackson: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1971), pp. 17, 20-28. James A. Ramage, "Jefferson Davis: Family Influences in the Making of a Great Statesman," Journal of Mississippi History (November 1989), 346, 348.

26. Coxe, ed. A Statement of the Arts and Manufactures, p. 159; Compendium of the Sixth Census, p. 229; United States Census Office, Agriculture of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), pp. 87, 206. The 1860 census gives the number of farms. Farms for the other two dates was calculated from the tax rolls for 1810 and 1835. Robert E. Gallman, "Self-Sufficiency in the Cotton Economy of the Antebellum South," Agricultural History 44 (January 1970),

27. Ellen Hyland to Rev. Dr. Chamberlain, May 2, 1848; Ellen Hyland to Mary [sister], August 5, 1859; also two other letters from Ellen to her sister, neither showing a date; in box 2E508, Hyland-Chamberlain-Gould Family Papers, NTC. Carrie Kiger to husband Bazil Kiger, March 31, 1854, box 2E516, folder 2, Kiger Family Papers, NTC.

According to Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, plantation mistresses held a supervisory position within plantation households where slaves did the bulk of the work, and the master was supreme authority. See Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 135-145.

28. Jane Turner Censer, "'Smiling Through Her Tears': Ante-Bellum Southern Women and Divorce," American Journal of Legal History 25 (Spring 1981), 24-47. According to Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "divorce for any cause was seldom granted, either by state legislatures or by equity or chancery courts." Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 301. Catherine Clinton explored a small sample of divorce cases, but was able to draw "no broad conclusions" except that they were few, and that most seem to have come from the planter class. See Clinton, Plantation Mistress, pp.80-85. Fox-Genovese does not discuss divorce in her book Within the Plantation Household.

29. Censer, "'Crying Through Her Tears'," Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, p. 284.

30. Anderson Hutchinson, Code of Mississippi: Being an Analytical Compilation of the Public and General Statutes of the Territory and State, with Tabular References to the Local and Private Acts, From 1798 to 1848 (Jackson, Miss.: Price and Fall, 1848), 495-97.

31. Demographic patterns also gave women in other frontier areas greater control over their lives. See Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "From Indentured Servant to Planter's Wife: White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," William and Mary Quarterly 34 (1977), 542-71.

32. Territorial Legislature, RG 5, vol. 126, Petitions to the General Assembly 1804-1809, MDAH; Lorenzo Dow, Vicissitudes, pp. 33-52.

33. Simpkins vs. Simpkins, September 1818; Barkley vs. Barkley, September, 1819; Williams vs. Williams, September, 1819; all are from the Superior Court Record, Warren County, September 1818-March 1821, OCHM. See also, Sea vs. Sea, September, 1819, in the same volume.

34. Blackman vs. Blackman, September, 1818; Lewis vs. Lewis, September, 1818; both in the Superior Court Record, Warren County, September 1818-March 1821, OCHM.

35. Cases decided by the District Chancery Court, which was established in 1856. See: Chancery Minutes, book 1, WCC.

36. The source for the Cotton divorce case is: Cotton vs. Cotton (1856), records of the Superior Court of Chancery, RG 32, SG 1, case # 5307, MDAH.

37. See the petition of Ann J. Singleton, Petitions to the General Assembly, 1804-1809, Territorial Legislature, RG 5, vol. 26, MDAH.

38. Hutchinson, Code of Mississippi, pp.495-497.

39. Bradley v. State, 1 Morris (Miss.), 20 (1824).

40. My explanation for the dependence of southern women on men and the implications of dependence for marital relations differs from that given by Bertram Wyatt-Brown in his book Southern Honor. Nevertheless, his description of male honor and the family ideal corresponds to conditions and behavior patterns of Warren County husbands and wives by the 1850s, although not for the early 1800s. See Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, pp. 281- 285.

CHAPTER 5
HOUSEHOLDS WITHIN HOUSEHOLDS:
MASTERS AND SLAVES

Henry Jones lived with his master on a farm near Natchez. His wife, Diana, lived nearby. When sold and carried to a farm on the Big Black, Jones determined to run away. He asked Diana to go with him, but she refused, perhaps out of fear of her master, who suspected Jones's scheme and already questioned her about it. Or perhaps she simply accepted the undeniable authority of the master. In any case, she would have nothing more to do with her husband. Enraged, Jones lashed out violently, not at the master who had persuaded the woman to stay, nor at his new master who was taking him away, but at Diana. He caught her early one morning as she was milking cows, kicked her in the stomach, knocked her in the head, and fatally plunged a knife eight inches into her right breast.¹

Henry's destructive outburst illustrated the harsh reality of life for the slaves. Too often studies of the slave community place "ole massa" in the background, bringing him to the foreground only during work hours, or in the familiar scene at the whipping post. But as Henry well

knew the master's shadow hung over each slave every minute of every day of their lives. For the worlds of southern blacks and whites were not built independently but within a social context that brought both together--unequally. The meeting of master and slave--and the household is one place where they met regularly--reverberated throughout the slave quarters, and shaped relations within the black community, within slave families.²

Little is known about the background of the first blacks to live in the Warren County area, but if they were representative of Natchez District slaves generally, then they were a motley lot, differing in their place of origin, culture, and language. Settlers brought some of them from the eastern seaboard colonies, while traders captured others in Africa or purchased them in the West Indies for sale at the slave market in New Orleans. The black population of Natchez thus reflected the far-flung world built by Europe's merchants, sailors, and men on the make, who carried to this small place people from all over the west coast of Africa, from English, French, and Spanish colonies on the islands of the Caribbean, plus Florida and Louisiana, and the United States from New England to South Carolina.³

As a rule Spain never imported Africans directly into its New World colonies, but instead granted monopoly

Table 5-1
Slaves Sold by Place of Origin

Place of Origin	Percentage of Slaves
Africa	58
West Indies	10
North America	32

N = 534

Source: Records of slave sales recorded at Natchez for the period 1782-1797, and abstracted in May Wilson McBee, Natchez Court Records, 1767-1805: Abstracts of Early Records (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1979).

privileges to a succession of other European slave-trading nations, beginning with the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, French, and finally, the English. By the last half of the eighteenth century, however, the right to sell slaves to Spanish colonies had been thrown open, although the English continued to supply the lion's share. As most of the African-born slaves of Spanish Natchez passed through Jamaica, their place of origin reflected the preference of Jamaican planters for the Southern Nigerian peoples, the Yako, Ibo, and Nago, from the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin. In language and political formation, these herders and farmers who lived in small, independent communities along the Niger River differed from the Bantu-speaking peoples from the monarchical states of Angola preferred by the planters of South Carolina, although they shared cultural traits with the Biafrans carried to Virginia.⁴

The majority of African-born slaves of Spanish Natchez probably shared similar languages, religions, and concepts of family formation. But not all slaves in the region were African-born. Incoming whites brought blacks born in Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas. Also present were Creoles from Louisiana, and the islands, Jamaica mostly, but also Barbados, Saint Domingue, and Martinique. Thus, in 1790 the black population of Natchez was a mix of newly arrived Africans just learning what life would be like in their new home, and of Afro-Americans familiar with European culture, though not necessarily English. Nearly all, like the white population, were new to Mississippi.

The flow of slaves into the Lower Mississippi nearly stopped with the disruptions in the Caribbean trade caused by the Haitian Revolution in 1791, and did not pick up again until after the departure of the Spanish.⁵ That year marked the end of direct African influence on Afro-American culture in Natchez, for by the time the United States took over the district the overseas trade had ended in all states except South Carolina. Until Congressional prohibition of the overseas slave trade in 1807, the same year the English ceased their trade, some planters imported Africans. But the great majority of incoming slaves were born in the United States, in Virginia, Maryland, or the Carolinas.

If, however, the diversity of cultures and experiences slowed the formation of a separate black society or

community, the process did not quicken with the end of the overseas trade. No less so for blacks than for whites, local circumstances, population patterns and the nature of the pre-plantation economy in particular, more than past experiences or inherited cultures shaped the lives of the slaves along the Mississippi.

During the early settlement years landowners who used slave labor at all relied primarily on hired labor. Any slaves they might have owned spent most of the year living and working somewhere else. Consequently, whites never really integrated blacks into their household. Before 1800, slaves accounted for a sixth to a third of the population that settled along the Loosa Chitto and the Walnut Hills. They could be found in only a minority of households, about one in five, where they lived in small holdings of four or five.⁶ Among adult slaves, men outnumbered women by a ratio of three to two. Nevertheless, nearly all slaveholding households had slaves of both sexes, and a majority had children as well. The presence of men, women, and children perhaps indicates family formation, although such a conclusion must remain tentative, for they might well have been unrelated. One in five adult slave women sold in the Natchez District during the years of Spanish administration took a young child to her new master's home, but no adult male or likely father went with them. If, however, the slaves did live in two parent families, those families

Table 5-2
Percentage of Slave Population by Age Group

	0-14	15-49	50+
Big Black and Bayou Pierre	32.9	15.9	51.2
Natchez District	36.1	58.9	4.9

Sources: Spanish Census of Natchez District, 1792, MDAH; Antonio Acosta Rodriguez, La Poblacion de Luisiana Espanola (1763-1803) (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1979), 273.

nevertheless were unusual in their composition.⁷ Children under the age of fifteen, scattered over ten households, totalled twenty-seven, and yet there was only one adult woman and six men under fifty years of age. Assuming that they were the mothers of these children, the women were giving birth late in their childbearing years, but surely not for the first time. Yet, sons and daughters born earlier were gone. The pioneers and small homesteaders of the Loosa Chitto had little need for higher priced laborers in the prime of life. Only a small fraction of farmers owned any slaves at all. Those who did purchased and kept only the young and the old, leaving the rest to the tobacco, indigo, and sugar planters farther south.

The influx of white farmers and the increasing energy devoted to raising cotton for market increased the demand on local supplies of slave labor. By 1815 or so the sometimes haphazard, informal hiring pattern of pioneer days developed into a more organized market in which masters carefully managed their slaves' time, and in which blacks suffered a corresponding loss in control over their own lives. In

particular, blacks lost much of the power they had to earn their own subsistence independently of their owners. As hiring-out became a business, a means by which masters could add to their incomes, slaveowners reclaimed the authority granted earlier to their slaves, if only by default, to bargain for a rate and to collect payment. A harsh reminder of their true condition, blacks no longer received direct compensation for their labors as they frequently had during the early years of settlement, but depended for their livelihood on the whites who owned their time.

"Since our conversation of the score of Negro Hire," wrote merchant David Hunt to a client in Warren County, "I have seen Mr. Hamilton and find he is in want of several negroes[. S]hould you & he agree on terms it will answer our purpose." In the developing rental market, merchants sometimes acted as brokers, bring slaveholders and slave renters together. Hunt also hired slaves for his own uses: "I will give you Twelve Dollars pr. month for a negroe Fellow who is a good ax man and will attend to his business without an overseer[. S]hould you acceed to this proposition pleas give the Boy a pass or send him in a Boat to the Gulf in the course of the Ensewing week or advise me of your determination that I may look out else ware."⁸

At least the practice of hiring, which by 1830 involved seventeen percent of the slave population, enabled slaves to escape the authority of a single master, or of any master

during the brief moment spent travelling between farms, as well as to experience conditions elsewhere, which could be better or worse. Moreover, there is evidence that some slaves continued to influence their masters' decisions regarding who would be hired out and where. But this hardly compensated for the more serious losses slaves suffered as cotton cultivation placed a greater demand on their labor. Moreover, the most profound consequences of the intensification of cotton production--the masters' increased interference in relations between the slaves--were already becoming more acute. A letter written by Daniel Burnet, who lived on the Bayou Pierre a few miles from the Big Black, is suggestive. Burnet describes how he visited Mrs. Evans, who currently employed his slave Jacob, and ordered the servant to proceed to the farm of a Mr. Barnes and begin working there. Jacob must have had a horrifying experience with Barnes, for he clearly did not wish to return. Burnet, however, insisted, forcing Jacob "to prevail on Frederick to take his place for the Ballance of his time," a solution which Burnet accepted.⁹

Even the incidence of slave hiring declined as slaveowners found plenty for their hands to do at home. With it went what benefits remained from the earlier period: the experience of working for more than one master, the opportunity to move from farm to farm, the sense of

Table 5-3
Incidence of Slave Hiring, 1810-1860

	1810	1820	1830	1860
% of slaveholders who rent:	12	34	34	20
% of slaves involved:	10	9	17	9

Source: See Appendix F.

independence and self-responsibility that the hiring-out system encouraged. Hiring peaked around 1830, as the cotton boom and so called "flush times" accelerated, straining local slave labor resources. The influx of blacks brought from the eastern states expanded the supply of slaves for sale and reduced the need to hire. As more farmers purchased slaves for their own use they treated them as full-time participants in the productive and reproductive functions of their household, and acquired an interest in all aspects of their servants' lives. At the same time, slaves formed their own households, the productive and reproductive functions of which overlapped and meshed with those of the master's household.

Slaveholders had no reason to discourage black household formation, and if it resulted in a high rate of birth they had every reason to encourage it for increasing the value of their estates. Slaves lived in white households as producers, and if by forming their own homes they did not interfere with that end--even better if they contributed to it--then masters let them be. There always existed, t

Table 5-4
Slave Population, Warren County, Mississippi, 1792-1860

	1792	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
Number of slaves	82	48	473	1287	4370	9428	7720	8246
Slaves per white	.33	.28	.67	.92	1.30	2.90	2.24	2.21
Males per 100 females	133	--	--	121	103	100	94	141
Average slave-holding size	4-5	--	6	10	11	14	12	13
% slaves in holdings larger than ten	21	--	58	65	77		88	91

Sources: Spanish Census, Natchez District, MDAH; Second Census, Schedule of the Whole Number of Persons in the Mississippi Territory; 1810 Census, Population Schedules, Warren County, RG 28, microfilm # 546, MDAH; 1820, 1830, 1840 Censuses, Population Schedules, Warren County, National Archives Microfilm Publications. Note: The figures for 1792 include the Bayou Pierre households near the Big Black River, in what became Claiborne County. The figures for 1840, 1850, and 1860 do not include Vicksburg, the slave population of which will be treated in a later chapter.

herefore, the potential for conflict between households and the households within, between the reproductive function of the slaves' family units, and the productive function of the slaveholder's enterprise. But the black family, and the slave household that maintained it, persisted within the masters' homes because the interests of each were not totally antipathetical.

From 1800 until the panic of 1839 people poured into Warren County, whites seeking a fortune in the cotton trade, and the blacks who would work for them. As Table 5-4 shows, during these years the black population grew to outnumber

the white population. The average size of slaveholding doubled. The percentage of slaves who found themselves in holdings of more than ten tripled. The opportunity for marriage increased with the density of population, and with the balancing of the sex ratio. Although slaves continued to find partners beyond the boundaries of their masters' households, they did not have to look far afield, as the slave population within the immediate vicinity increased. Moreover, the growing size of slaveholdings enhanced the chances for slaves of marrying on the farms where they lived. By 1830 one in five Warren County households included a slave mother and child, or even a complete nuclear slave family with a husband-father present.¹⁰

The significance of family to enslaved Afro-Americans is evident from its durability over the course of more than two centuries of slavery. In their struggle to survive, blacks found strength and solace in the kinship networks they maintained, oftentimes only in the memory of a lost relation kept alive in a name passed on to a newborn child. Moreover, the strength of the black family may well have urged masters to accommodate it more than they might have otherwise. The black family survived the ordeal of slavery because African Americans adapted it to the demands imposed by the ruling race. In so doing, however, they turned their families into an integral feature of the institution that kept them in bonds.¹¹

Within the master's household, slaves served one purpose: to contribute to the material well being of the white inhabitants. As property, living assets whose value their owners measured monetarily, they performed this function when they reproduced themselves. As human beings, however, they would not be bred like cattle. Confronted on the one hand with the need to see their property increase, and on the other hand with the fact of slave humanity, masters not only permitted but encouraged slaves to form households and families so that they might live and reproduce as people.

Warren County slaveholders, like their counterparts across the South, housed their servants in family cabins rather than barracks. They provided them with a household setting, in other words, so that couples could live together in some privacy as husband and wife. But if the prospect of a household of one's own was not enough to encourage slaves to marry, there was the celebration of the event.¹² Bazil Kiger, owner of Buena Vista plantation at Eagle Bend, just up river from Vicksburg, provided the bride and groom with fancy clothes, sometimes even a white dress, but all hand-me-downs from his and his wife's closet. In addition, he gave all his slaves a feast in the dining room of his "big house," although much of the food may have come from the slaves' own gardens. Describing the festivities of one wedding to his wife, he noted that the table "seemed to be

quite bountifully supplied the variety however was not very great consisting principally of Hog, Shoat, pork, & Pig, with any quantity of cakes & whiskey." "They had their dance in the Hall," he continued. "Old Charles Fiddling who at times I really feared would wear a hole through the floor with his foot. I fell asleep about 2 oclock leaving them still at it in high glee." Kiger took great delight and pride in the happiness his slaves expressed on such occasions. "You know," he wrote his wife at another time, "it is against my principal to sell but were I disposed to do so an offer of 10000 dollars would not buy them tomorrow." But the real source of Kiger's delight showed through in his next sentence: "I learn through Meredith who learns through Dolly that matches are rapidly being made up and that they are desirous [of] knowing my wishes as to whether I desire them to wait till Christmas," before marrying. "Isaac, Stape, Yellow Bill, Lazy Bill & even Zeke I am informed have made their selections . . . It does my heart good to see them so cheerful & happy."¹³

Kiger claimed some success in inducing his slaves to find husbands or wives, boasting of how he had talked Zeke into picking two hundred pounds of cotton a day by threatening not to allow the slave to marry if he failed to maintain this heroic pace. But Kiger had a stake in his slaves' marriages; Zeke need not have worried. The greatest incentive to family formation, at least for the women, was

the prospect of a reduced work load. From the slaveowner's perspective, this had the added benefit of enhancing the chances of conception and a healthy birth. Slave breeding, therefore, was as much the business of every master as raising a crop, for by investing in one, he divested in the other. He could either push his women hard in the fields, and suffer a lower birth rate, or reduce their work load, increase the number of births, but take fewer bales of cotton to market. It required cold calculation, clear perceptions of the payoffs of short term cotton prices versus long term slave prices. Such a business left them no room to doubt the value of the slave family, or of the lives they trucked.

Around 1827 or so Judge Alexander Covington and his nephew Edmund left Natchez and settled on adjoining acreage totalling nearly two thousand acres in the south end of Warren County, near the Big Black River. Edmund took charge of the nearly forty slaves, the judge being too old for physical exertion, and proceeded to turn the forest into cotton and corn fields. However, much of the land they had chosen, broken by numerous hills and hollows, quickly proved itself unsuitable for agriculture. The slopes, when cleared, would not hold the topsoil, while the low-lying areas, small and marshy, were "not susceptible of cultivation." Confronted by the limitations of their land on their plans for cotton planting, the Covington's adopted a new business

strategy: "The policy is not to make large crops but to raise young negroes."¹⁴ As far as the Covingtons were concerned, and their neighbors too, the decision to concentrate on raising slaves rather than on planting was strictly business. Questions of humanity did not interfere in the matter, no more than if they had opted to cultivate more acres in corn, or to try a different variety of cotton.

Edmund Covington died in 1833. Over the next six years his wife's brother, Isaac Roberts, and his wife's sister's husband, the well known Natchez planter and naturalist Benjamin L. C. Wailes, disputed over who should administer the estate. The final decision rested on the court's judgement of which of the two men was most skillful at running the business Edmund had left, that it to say, at raising slaves. The expert testimony of neighbors and overseers offers excellent insight into the practice of slave breeding.

To increase the number of births on their plantations, a successful slave breeding operation required, according to witnesses, that servants be well fed and clothed, and provided with "comfortable dwellings." Most importantly, the work load of women between the ages of fifteen and forty had to be reduced. "If negro women are driven hard," observed a neighbor, "they will not increase so well." Tobias Stephens, another neighbor, agreed, and suggested rating "breeding women" at half a hand: "If breeding women are

worked hard on the hills, it is likely to produce abortion & sickness." A witness for the plaintiff thought the current administrator had not managed the plantation very well, and offered as evidence his observation of women working in the field.¹⁵

Despite the testimony of the last witness, the court decided for Wailes, who remained as administrator, for he had succeeded quite remarkably in increasing the number of slave births, and the value of the plantation. A March, 1836 inventory of slaves showed seven recent births in a slaveholding of fifty-five, for a crude birth rate of thirteen percent. Another inventory taken in March three years later listed sixty slaves, including two recent births. The overseer reported eight more births by November of that year, for a crude birth rate of fifteen percent, more than double the national average for slaves.¹⁶

Historians have generally assumed that slave breeding was, as a rule, not practiced by southern planters. While acknowledging that there were exceptions, most would agree with Robert Fogel's conclusion that when masters interfered in the family lives of their slaves the effect was usually a lower, not higher, birth rate. Economic incentives led slaveholders to concentrate on raising staples and fashioning a disciplined, hardworking labor force, which conflicted with slave family formation. They sold husbands and children, restricted marriages to the boundaries of the

plantation where slaves could be more strictly supervised, and pushed their workers hard in the fields. Masters did provide family housing, but had little incentive to do much more that would increase the number of slave births, for on the whole, historians have argued, the slave family was essentially inimical, or at least irrelevant, to the interests of slaveholders.¹⁷

But historians have not fully comprehended the extent to which masters and slaves shared an interest in black family formation, and for this reason they have misperceived the very nature of slave breeding. Masters who bred slaves did not practice eugenic manipulation of their servants, a charge levelled at them by northern abolitionists. They understood the humanity of their slaves in a way that their northern antagonists did not. Nor did their efforts to increase fertility cause them to disrupt slave family life, indeed, quite the reverse. Masters strived to create conditions that would encourage family formation, and thereby raised slave fertility. This was no trivial matter.¹⁸ They figured the reproductive success of their labor force into calculations of profit and loss, they made decisions about whether to pick more cotton or raise more slaves, and they called this the business of slave breeding. Masters had much to gain by attempting to increase the birth rate of their slaves, and so they endeavored to do just that. Fortunately for them the slaves wanted to form

families and to raise children, although for the entirely different purpose of fashioning a life apart from whites and the everyday hardships of a life in chains. Nevertheless, this articulation of interests between masters and slaves was the basis of whites' slave breeding practices. Masters did not dehumanize their slaves; they fed off of the very humanity of the people they oppressed.

Slaveowners who succeeded in raising the fertility of their females servants stood to increase their household income substantially. By encouraging women to have children Edmund Covington's plantation realized an additional two thousand dollars per adult female slave over a fifteen year period above what the same women would have earned had they been driven to pick twice as much cotton.¹⁹ And the slave raising efforts of the Covingtons were not exceptional. Their neighbors spoke of slave raising like it was as common as planting corn and cotton. Perhaps it was. A slaveholder named Crowder who owned twenty or so slaves was reputed to be "an unsuccessful farmer, generally buying his corn and meat, but that he succeeded very well in raising young negroes." Ellen Cragin told an interviewer years after emancipation that her mother was a "breeder," and that "she had children fast." "It wasn't her work to be in the field," recalled Cragin. Her master "made her breed and then made her work at the loom," where the work was less physically stressful. Mary Jane Jones's mother "was a wedding gift to

my master at the time of his marriage; was given to him as a kind of nest egg to breed slaves for him, and just as soon as he carried her home, he bought a slave husband for her and children came to both families thick and fast."²⁰

Raising slaves and cotton were crucial to the business interests of southern slaveholders, but they tended to run at cross purposes. The best managers, therefore, raised both slaves and a staple, giving priority to whichever promised the greatest returns, but not neglecting the other half of the business any more than necessary. The relationship between cotton planting and slave rearing is illustrated in Figure 5-1. At point 0 a female slave does no work and has no children, thus brings no return to her owner's investment. The slaveowner realizes the greatest return at point D, where his slave does a maximum amount of work and raises a biological maximum number of children. In actuality, however, female slaves worked and raised children. The master's return on investment, therefore, fell somewhere along the line 0-D, more precisely, along line A-D, where A represents the minimum amount of work regardless of number of children, and the minimum number of children regardless of amount of work.

If the rate of return from working versus raising slaves were constant, then an increase in one would have meant a proportional decrease in the other along line F-H. Any point along that line would have been the slaveowner's

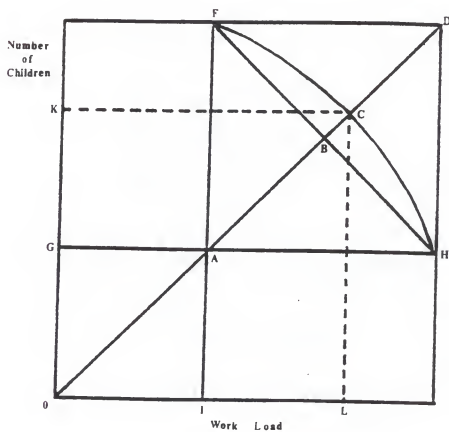


Figure 5-1 Raising Slaves versus Raising Cotton.

objective, for the rate of return would not change. At F he concentrates on raising slaves by encouraging his slave woman to have a maximum number of children, and meanwhile gets as much work out of her as possible without jeopardizing his main objective. At H he pursues an alternate strategy of working his slave as hard as possible, although he can still expect her to have some children. One would, however, expect slaveholders to maximize returns in the short term at H rather than opt for the long term investment of raising slaves. And yet, the Covingtons gave priority to raising slaves over planting cotton, indicating that the rate of return for hard work versus child rearing was in fact not constant. The line F-C-H more accurately represents the relationship between working and raising slaves. When workload is reduced, the number of children increases more than enough to compensate for the loss in returns due to less work. The rate of return peaks at point C, and then diminishes at points F and H. The master's objective is C, which is attained by reducing workload to L and raising K children.

Slaveholders probably did not strive for point C all the time, but constantly altered their strategy according to several fluctuating variables. For example, a planter might decide to work his women hard if he felt cotton prices were going to be high that year, opting for a lower rate of return, but one that paid off in the short term. When prices were low, he might reduce the work load of his women and

hope to raise more slaves. If poor soil meant a rapidly diminishing return on labor inputs--the problem faced by the Covingtons--then there would be little point in working female slaves hard in the fields.²¹

Within the slaveholding household, masters used their slaves to maximize their income by squeezing as much labor out of them as possible, but also by encouraging women to have children. In working their servants, slaveowners battled against the wills of the people they kept in bonds. The slaves had no desire to sweat all day for someone else. They did, however, want families and children. By raising slaves masters used to their advantage some of their servants' own needs and desires. Bondwomen seized upon the opportunity to reduce their work load, to live in their own households, and to raise the families that were so important to them and to their identity as people. But the institution of slavery was not so completely dehumanizing. Quite the reverse, it fed off the very humanity of the oppressed, nowhere more visibly than when it encouraged loving mothers to raise children only to turn them into dollars and cents in a plantation ledger.

Slaves, of course, were valued most for their labor, and within their masters' households they were the primary producers of food, domestic manufactures, and the commodities sold for cash. Slave work patterns on Warren County's farms and plantations corresponded to what

historians have observed across the South.²² On small farms one slave might be responsible for "every kind of chore from cooking to pulling a plow in the fields," while on large plantations slaveowners organized their workers into a hierarchy of occupational categories. On Nanachehaw Plantation in Warren County, for example, twelve slaves worked at domestic tasks while sixty worked in the field. The domestic servants included the gardener, cook, housekeeper, stable hand, and personal servants who worked in the master's house, as well as those who worked for the plantation residents generally, such as the plantation cook, a washer and milker, and the woman who cared for the children. James Allen, the plantation's owner, divided field hands into two main groups, those who worked among the rows of cotton and corn, and those who spent their days felling timber, digging ditches, and draining swamp land. A white overseer supervised all work, with the assistance in the cotton fields of a black driver. In addition, the plantation had a carpenter, a stock keeper, and a cart driver.²³

Regardless of farm size, however, work for slaves in Mississippi was hard. Born in Virginia but sold to a Warren County slaveholder, Tom Bones found that "for a long time he could not get used to cotton growing as he had been accustomed to wheat and tobacco." Ben Montgomery, also born and raised in Virginia, worked on Joseph Davis's Hurricane plantation. As his son Isaiah later recalled, Ben "did not

take kindly to the change from Virginia town life to plantation life, so he ran away." Davis soon recovered him and relieved him from field work. Montgomery learned to read and write, became a skilled mechanic and civil engineer, and eventually ran the plantation store. For the majority of Davis's slaves, however, work remained drudgingly routine for much of the year: cut weeds, pick and chop cotton.²⁴

Slaves spent most of their time, but not all of it, working directly for their masters. They also worked to provide for themselves and their families, both producing and exchanging in an internal economy. Benjamin L. C. Wailes allowed the slaves of Fonsylvania plantation to raise their own chickens, which they marketed along with eggs. In addition, he provided them with land, tools, and draft animals so that they could plant corn. Wailes was their largest customer, paying them from eighty to over a hundred dollars each year, although he permitted them to conduct some business with other whites. The slaves at Nanachew kept, in addition to chickens, a twelve acre garden of potatoes, as well as hives of bees. The slave economy was more extensive and complexly organized at Buena Vista plantation. The men earned from five to twenty-five dollars per year cutting wood, which they sold to their master, who in turn sold it to passing steamboats. The women raised corn for their families, selling surpluses to single men who paid with their income from chopping firewood. Men and women used

most of their cash to purchase sugar, molasses, flour, and tobacco from the plantation commissary.²⁵

In what was, literally, an internal economy, masters did their best to contain the production and distribution of garden products and manufactured items within the borders of their farms, although it was "customary," noted Samuel Luckett, "after the laying of the crop, for planters to allow their negroes to go to town to sell their chickens &c." In addition, the slaves who drove the wagons of cotton into town generally took advantage of the opportunity to make a few purchases, usually in local grog shops, with some of the money they saved over the year. In December town streets filled with slaves making their Christmas purchases. But for most of the year, for most of the slaves, owners constricted the locus of the slave household economy. Although despite their best efforts, some slaves did manage to trade with outsiders, usually after dark with peddlers or transient whites and free blacks.²⁶

The gardens might seem to contradict the logic of the slavery. To be sure, they provided slaves with a sense, or at least a taste, of independence. Moreover, once the privilege of working a garden and selling its products had been granted, slaves quickly turned it into a right they refused to relinquish. But the significance of the gardens as a challenge to the institution of slavery can easily be exaggerated. Economically, the internal economy was not

inimical to the interests of the slaveholders, and, like the black family, actually became a part of the system. Masters, after all, encouraged their servants to raise part of their own subsistence, provided them with the time and resources to do so, and supervised their marketing of surpluses. Slaveholders continued to do so individually even while as a group they sometimes worried about how it undermined their control. For as they knew only too well, slaves worked most productively when they worked for themselves. Rather than battling this reality, slaveholders used it to reduce their expenditures on products produced elsewhere, to provide their slaves with healthier diets, and themselves with stronger workers. Indeed, the marketed products of one slave could subsidize the costs of his or her maintenance by as much as fifty-percent.²⁷

The system succeeded because the time spent tending garden plots, raising chickens, and making baskets produced more than the extra cotton raised instead would have purchased. The internal slave economy was integral to, and even partially underwrote, the larger economy that kept blacks in bondage. There was no overt conflict between the two. While the slaves cultivated vegetables or raised chickens on their own accord during their "leisure" time, they never really received control of the distribution of these products, except within the confines of the

plantation. Access to outside markets remained restricted by the white head of the household.

Thus, slave men and women lived in households within households, as it were, forming parts in the larger whole controlled by the master. Within their own households, slaves formed families, raised children, and provided as much of a living for themselves as they could under the circumstances. Yet their households existed within the master's home, and by struggling to build a family life for themselves the slaves contributed to their owner's productive enterprise, and to their own bondage. Thus, the protection against slavery that their households and families seemed to provide individual blacks was at best ironic, and at worst a cruel illusion. Whites respected the integrity of slave families and homes, they treated blacks as people, enough at least that the slaves could believe they meant it. Then the master would suddenly shatter the illusion, throwing the slave's world into turmoil and confusion.

The social atmosphere within Warren County households was always tense. Slavery, after all, was an institution of violence, and it set the tone for relations between all household members. When not expressed overtly, anger always lurked just beneath the surface of social interaction. Ellen Cragin was so filled with hatred for her master, who regularly raped and whipped her mother, that she stole a gun

and kept it behind the door of her cabin. Every day she told herself that if he whipped her mother again she would shoot the man down, although she never dared to do it. Yet the gun was always there just the same, even if her master never knew. If, however, whites could not know what their slaves were thinking, they had good reason to be fearful. The poisonings and barn burnings attributed to slaves may have been imagined. Or perhaps not. Either way they put an edge on household affairs.²⁸

Had relations between masters and slaves been a steady battle then both sides could have been certain of their enemies, and of what they had to do to protect themselves. To be sure, there were many moments when such a war clearly existed. For example, when an overseer hired by Samuel McCray killed two slaves, only to be acquitted by a jury "on the ground of danger of his own life, from insubordination, and attack by said negroes," other slaves retaliated by setting fire to the corn and corn cribs. In another case a slave named Wesley, while being "chastised," picked up a hoe and struck his overseer with it, injuring but not killing his antagonist. Slaveowner Joel Cameron was not so lucky as Wesley's overseer. Three of his slaves clubbed him to death and dumped his body in a lake near the Yazoo River. But the lines of battle were not always so clearly defined as they were in these examples. The violence that began with the master-slave relationship did not always end there.²⁹

Maddened by the breakup of his family, Henry Jones vented his anger by killing his wife, whose behavior confused him. That his master sold him could not have surprised him; masters separated slaves regularly. But Diana, by not running with him, had wrecked his efforts to keep his family together. Far from protecting her family and household against the power of the master, she had, from Jones's perspective, turned against them. Diana, of course, was only trying to spare herself the punishment inflicted on captured runaways, a punishment that her owner undoubtedly assured her would be both harsh and certain. She accepted the breakup of her marriage as an accomplished fact. She understood better than her husband that marriages existed when they suited the masters' purposes, or at least when they did not conflict with them. Whereas Henry had deluded himself into thinking that his family existed apart from, or even despite slavery, Diana knew that it could survive only so long as it suited her master's convenience.

Henry Jones's murder of his wife was no isolated outburst of slave violence, but was rooted in the paradox of the household within the household. Slaves like Jones, in the space masters granted them, married, built homes, raised and provided for families, and found themselves lulled into believing that their lives were their own only to discover suddenly how much they had been fooled, that their lives actually belonged to someone else, that they lived in

another's household. Such awakenings were enraging, not to mention confusing. On one hand, they wished to remain loyal to their family and friends, of whom they expected the same in return. On the other hand, they were forced to oblige their masters. Some, such as Diana, performed this juggling act better than others. Aware of the tenuousness of their existence they tried to protect themselves and those they loved by compromising the integrity of their households and families to meet the demands of the master. But in so doing they admitted that their homes and families did not belong to them after all, and for that they received the hatred and bitterness of the Henry Joneses, who had forgotten, or who could not bear to be reminded that despite the marriages, families, and the homes with their own gardens, they were all slaves.

Confusion and the potential for violence were never greater than when a master physically intruded into the domain of the slave family, shattering the very illusion of the separate and secure household he had helped foster, and which he even seemed to believe. In December, 1859, an overseer working for John D. Fondren of Hinds County, which adjoins Warren County, forced a slave named Charlotte "to submit to sexual intercourse with him." The woman reported the rape to her husband Alfred, who avenged the attack on his wife, and on himself as head of his household, by killing the overseer. In court, Alfred's lawyers built their

defence around the sanctity of marriage and family and the man's obligation to protect them. "Our law," they contended, "regards with as much tenderness the excesses of outraged conjugal affections in the negro as in the white man." Slavery "has not deprived him of his social or moral instincts, and he is as much entitled to the protection of the laws, when acting under their influence, as if he were free." They were words that Alfred surely believed, had been taught to believe not only by example of others, white and black, but by his own experience as a husband and household head. But Alfred's life as he understood it existed only within the world of his master's plantation. The lawyers failed to convince a jury and judge who knew what Alfred did not, that slaves were object property first, and people second, and then only when it suited the interests of their owners to treat them as such. Charlotte, too, had been misled, believing that her husband could actually do something to help her. True, the overseer was dead, but there would always be another. And Alfred was condemned to the gallows.³⁰

Charlotte might not have told Alfred of the overseer's assault. But her illusion of family sanctity would have been shattered just the same. Moreover, Alfred might have blamed her. That is what seems to have happened to a slave women on W. C. Green's plantation in Claiborne County, just across the Big Black River from Warren County. Her relationship

with her master is not stated in the record, but circumstances certainly put them in close company; she was his house servant. All that is known is that she did something to anger her husband enough that he attempted to kill her in the kitchen adjoining the Big House. When master Green arrived on the scene and attempted to intervene, the slave fired a gun at him, just missing, but in the ensuing struggle, which moved to the yard outside the kitchen, Green suffered a mortal stab wound. In the confusion the woman tried to flee, but was caught by her husband who dispatched her with the same knife he had used on the master moments earlier. The cause of this violent affair might have come out in a trial, had there been one. Neighboring whites, however, hastily silenced the surviving party to this menage a trois with a rope and a tall tree, leaving us to draw conclusions based on circumstances. But whatever they were, the slave's turning on his owner before he had killed his wife indicates that the master was no innocent who just happened upon a domestic quarrel, but was party to whatever it was, and we can easily imagine what, that set off the slave's rage.³¹

A most bizarre case of miscegenation and murder occurred in Bolivar County, although the affair began on a plantation in Madison Parish, Louisiana, just across the Mississippi River from Warren County.³² On an evening in February, 1857, Lafayette Jones sat down to dinner with his

wife of two years, and their one year old daughter, Lelia Virginia. After the meal their cook, a slave named Josephine purchased recently in New Orleans, served them all some tea. Within minutes the family was retching and doubling over in pain, victims of what a doctor diagnosed as arsenic poisoning. The baby died during the night. Josephine, the obvious suspect, proclaimed her innocence and pointed a finger at another slave, a field hand named George. When questioned, several other slaves acknowledged having seen George with a small vial of rat poison, which the sheriff discovered shattered in a fireplace. Both slaves were arrested and tried for murder.

In court, neither defendant disputed the circumstantial evidence against them. Josephine had served the lethal tea, and George readily admitted that the poison had been his. The case thus hinged on the question of motive, of which as quickly became apparent there was plenty. George had belonged to Jones for over a decade, although for the last two or three years he had complained of rheumatism and begged off field work. Recently, however, a new overseer had convinced Jones that the slave had been "indulged." Poor George soon found himself back in the field laying off rows of corn, his master "tighter on him than ever before." For her part, Josephine had been unhappy about being moved from New Orleans to a Mississippi plantation. When she so much as told her master so she received a whipping. Her continued

bad humor earned her another lashing from her mistress on the very day of the poisoning.

The principal suspects in the murder were not the only slaves with motives for trying to kill the master and his family. Jones's first wife had died mysteriously several years earlier on a plantation near Vicksburg. On that occasion he had two servants, Eliza and Elsey, arrested for murder, although he later dropped the charges and made no more of the incident. Other slaves later claimed that Eliza bragged about poisoning her owner's first wife, and of how she would do likewise to the new mistress. If there was an earlier poisoning, Jones apparently provoked it by his repeated raping of Eliza, and of Elsey's daughter Lethe. Fear of embarrassment should his lascivious activities be made public would certainly explain why he squelched any investigation. In any case, he did not change his ways. Only a few months after Jones remarried, Lethe gave birth to a mulatto child said to have been fathered by her master. Moreover, Jones had taken a fancy to his new slave Josephine, raping her in New Orleans before moving her into the kitchen of his Big House in Mississippi.

Juries convicted George and Josephine. Whether they were actually the guilty parties will never be known, although George was probably a scapegoat whose only crime was keeping a bottle of rat poison that he had found washed ashore by the river. By all reports, Josephine was clearly

unhappy, and received regular rounds of abuse from both her master and mistress. The real killer might well have been Eliza, or Elsey, possibly for a second time. Regardless of who actually performed the deed, the incident demonstrated how the relationship between master and slave, in this case between Jones and Josephine, could strain all relations within the household.

Problems began as soon as Jones brought of object of his passions into his home and made her his cook. Josephine's presence in the Big House understandably strained her relations with Mrs. Jones, who must have worried about the state of her young marriage. Moreover, she was not on the best of terms with the other slaves. She was a newcomer and it would take time before she would be welcomed by them. Already Josephine had incurred the anger or resentment of Elsey, whom she replaced as cook. Elsey might have been expected to understand Josephine's situation, but she had problems of her own to worry about. An elderly slave who had worked for Jones for twenty years she suddenly found herself cast out of the Big House and into the fields. Thus, Josephine had to fend for herself the best she could. Whether or not she administered the arsenic, once accused of murder she acted to save her life in the best possible way, by implicating someone else. George was the obvious choice. He had possessed the poison, and had been heard to grumble about the harsh treatment he had

received of late. By fingering him, though, Josephine further alienated herself from the other slaves, who rallied to George's defence. Meanwhile, Eliza and Elsey kept quiet, for if they administered the poison they were content to let the accused take the blame.

The record says nothing of relations between Jones and his wife, but one can certainly imagine. Mrs. Jones, her daughter dead, her own life nearly lost, and hearing stories of her predecessor's murder, must have wondered if her husband's libido doomed her, too. For his part, Jones realized that he had erred gravely in bringing Josephine into his home. He wanted her gone for good, and assisted in the prosecution against her while hiring the attorneys who worked for George's defence. In the end, juries condemned both slaves, although Josephine received a second trial on grounds that questions of miscegenation had been improperly rejected as irrelevant. The appellate judge declared them relevant indeed, for they went straight to motive. Evidence that Jones "was in the habit of sexual intercourse with her" indicated that Josephine "was not discontented with her condition and could have had no malice to lead her to commit the crime." The paternalism reflected in this opinion probably terrified Jones. He surely wanted to believe it, had to believe it to justify his regular raping of the women he owned, and yet he knew well how far the statement was from accurately reflecting relations within his household.

In the end, those relations probably did not change. With Josephine gone Elsey probably moved back into the Big House. Eliza and Lethe were still present; their master tempted by them as before. And the mulatto baby served as a continuing reminder to Mrs. Jones of her husband's activities, and of the danger to her life and family that lurked in her home.

The Jones baby poisoning was an exceptional affair that nevertheless illustrated the inherent instability of the slaveholding household. In the early settlement period masters and slaves came together only when one required the labor of the other. The households and families of each had little or no place within this working relationship. With the rise of staple agriculture, however, masters demanded more of their laborers, and assumed for themselves a far greater role in the lives of their servants, integrating the black household and family into the productive enterprise of the slaveholding household. This new context personalized the master-slave association to a greater degree, giving it a more significant place in the lives of individual blacks and whites, and in the relationship of each person with the remaining members of the household.

At the same time, the slave household, and the families for which they functioned to protect and provide, did not disintegrate. Blacks took advantage of their increasing numbers to fashion a vital family life that would mitigate relations with their owners, and with whites generally.

Masters did not oppose the efforts of their slaves to marry and raise children, for they contributed to the productivity of the slaveholding household. The same conditions that enabled the formation of black households and families also encouraged masters to interfere in the lives of their slaves, who felt their master's presence all the more because their families meant so much to them.³³

Historians have argued that the slave family and community provided comfort and security in otherwise unbearable conditions. The slave household within the white household did precisely that. Yet, frequently forgotten is how family and community--the group--placed great responsibilities, even burdens, on individual slaves. When a slave was forced to turn children over to a slave trader, or to sleep with the master, or to implicate another slave in some petty crime, or perhaps murder, love and a felt sense of loyalty for children, spouses, comrades in bondage did not make such occasions any less painful. Neither did love make it easier for the others to understand why sometimes one had no choice but to let loved ones down.

Notes

1. May Wilson McBee, comp. The Natchez Court Records: 1767-1805: Abstracts of Early Records (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), pp.101, 104, 222-224.

2. For a survey of slavery literature since Elkins, see: Peter Kolchin, "American Historians and Antebellum Southern Slavery, 1959-1984," in A Master's Due: Essays in Honor of David Herbert Donald pp. , William L. Cooper, Michael F.

Holt and John McCardell, eds. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), and Charles B. Dew, "The Slavery Experience," in Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higginbotham, pp. 120-161, John B. Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen, eds. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

3. Data on Natchez slaves, hereafter cited as Natchez Slave Data, is derived from records of slave sales recorded at Natchez for the period 1782-1797, and abstracted in McBee, Natchez Court Records.

4. Natchez Slave Data. At least fifty percent of the slaves imported from Africa came from Guinea, the region comprising the Windward Coast, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and the Bight of Benin. The place of origin of forty-four percent was given as Africa, with no further specification, but were probably from Guinea as well. Only three percent came from Angola or the Bight of Biafra, the two regions that supplied so many slaves to Virginia and South Carolina. On the African origins of slaves imported by British colonies, see Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp. 150, 157, 159-161. See also, Allan Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1986), 321-322. On the re-export trade of Jamaica, see Herbert S. Klein, The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 152-155. On the linguistic and cultural groups of Africa, see George Peter Murdock, Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), especially pp. 242-251 on the Southern Nigerians. On the people of Niger River region during the years of the slave trade, see Basil Davidson, Black Mother: The Years of the African Slave Trade (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1961), pp. 197-269.

5. Fear of insurrection led the Baron de Carondelet, governor of Spanish Louisiana, to order an end to the importation of slaves. Jack D. L. Holmes, "Some Economic Problems of Spanish Governors of Louisiana," Hispanic American Historical Review (November 1962), 521-543.

6. Spanish Census of Natchez District, 1792, MDAH; Abstract of Census, Mississippi Territory, 1801, roll # 546, Pickering County, MDAH. Because of the small number of households along the Loosa Chitto in 1792, I included Bayou Pierre in my calculation of slave-to-white ratio, and slaves per household. See also, Chapter Two, n.21.

7. Natchez Slave Data.

8. David Hunt to Henry D. Downs, February 8, 1812, David Hunt Papers, NTC.

9. Daniel Burnet to William McAlpine, August, 1815, Daniel Burnet Papers, NTC.

10. I have assumed that a slaveholding of ten or more included at least some variation of a family. According to the 1830 census twenty percent of all households, and thirty-four percent of slaveholding households, had ten or more slaves. MS Population Schedules for Warren County, Mississippi, 1830.

11. Recent scholars of the slave family in the United States have followed some version of three interpretations offered by Herbert Gutman, Eugene D. Genovese, and Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman. Gutman, in The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon, 1976), especially pp. 45-100, argues that the black family survived slavery because it was adapted to the array of disruptions and hardships thrown at it by American slaveholders, who had little or no concern for affective black families, which they realized were irrelevant to the biological reproduction of slaves, in which they did have a financial interest. Genovese, in Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage, 1976), pp. 450-523, disagrees, arguing instead that masters recognized the humanity of their slaves, and thus their right to form families. Paternalistic masters, according to Genovese, not only accepted the black family, contrary to Gutman, but accommodated it into their notion of the duties of slaveholders to protect their slaves. Needless to say, masters frequently found themselves torn between their financial interests and their responsibilities to their servants. Only when pressed, however, did they give in to the former. Fogel and Engerman, Time On the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1974), pp. 126-144, offer the third interpretation, that slaves formed strong families because it was in the masters' best financial interests to allow them to do so, or at least the masters had few economic reasons to interfere with slave families. See also, Robert William Fogel, Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), pp. 147-153.

Gutman's emphasis on the cultural adaptability of the slave family is well founded. He forgets, however, that adapting it to slavery necessarily made it a part of the institution, not something antithetical to it. Thus, Fogel and Engerman correctly point out the slaveholders' interests in encouraging and maintaining family formation, definitive

proof of the success with which blacks adapted their families to slavery. Fogel and Engerman err in emphasizing the determinative power of capitalist slavery. The black family was not a by-product of the masters profit-maximizing enterprise. The masters adapted to the slaves and the black family just as much as the slaves adapted to the demands of the masters. Genovese's notion of the paternalistic compromise worked out between slaveholders and slaves is perhaps the most satisfactory of the three. His emphasis on the paternalistic ideal, however, blinds him to the material conditions that permitted blacks to form strong families, and which encouraged masters to allow family formation. Paternalism or some such idea of slavery, therefore, was the product, not the cause, of conditions that allowed blacks to adapt to the demands of the masters, and just as importantly, the masters to adapt to the demands of the slaves.

12. According to the 1860 census, Warren County slaveholders provided on cabin for every three or four slaves. For a description of cabins on one Big Black River plantation, see Charles Sackett Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1933), p. 39. According to Robert Fogel, Without Consent or Contract, p. 153, slave fertility rates in the U.S. were higher than elsewhere in the Americas "not because masters manipulated the sexual behavior of slaves as they did their cattle, but because they housed slaves in family cabins rather than barracks."

13. Kiger to wife, October 29, 1852, Bazil Kiger to wife, January 1, 1852 [Kiger meant 1853], Kiger Family Papers, box 2E516, folder 1, NTC.

14. Roberts vs Wailes, Probate Minutes Book F, p. 69, Chancery Clerk's Office, Warren County Courthouse, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

15. Roberts vs. Wailes, Probate Minutes Book F, pp. 66, 67, 74.

16. Estate of E. H. Covington, Probate File 301, WCC; Probate Minutes Book F, WCC. The crude birth rate for slaves for the period 1820-1850 was slightly more than six percent, that is, six births per hundred people. See Fogel, Without Consent or Contract, p. 126, figure 20.

17. Fogel, Without Consent or Contract, p. 153. Fogel and Engerman, Time on the Cross, pp. 78-86. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, pp. 453-454. Gutman, 158-159. Richard Sutch, "The Breeding of Slaves for Sale and the Westward Expansion of Slavery, 1850-1860," in Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies, eds. Stanley L. Engerman

and Eugene D. Genovese (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 173-210. Michael Tadman, Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 121-129.

18. Historians have trivialized slave breeding practices because they did not measure up to the charges made by northern abolitionists. But far from exposing "the myth of slave-breeding," such a view actually tells us more about abolitionist miscomprehensions of slavery than about the institution itself. Fogel and Engerman, for example, find that slave breeding of the kind described by slavery's opponents never existed, but then leap to the unfounded conclusion that slave breeding did not exist. Fogel and Engerman, Time on the Cross, pp. 78-86.

19. The rounded figure of two thousand dollars was calculated in the following manner, using values given in the Covington estate papers: According to several witness, the plantation should have raised at least 5 bales of cotton per year, plus a subsistence of corn. Some said 7 bales. The figures are low, but reflect the broken terrain which would have slowed picking. In any case, if a woman picked only 2.5 bales per year over 15 years, at 1830s prices she would have picked \$2100 in cotton (\$56 per bale). If over that same fifteen year period she raised 7 children to adulthood, she would have brought her master an additional \$6650 (\$950 per slave being the average. Men cost somewhat more, women somewhat less). The children, however, would have cost the plantation for food and clothing until they reached age 9, the break even age (Fogel, Without Consent or Contract, p.56, figure 8.). At \$30 per year per child for their first nine years, the net income from the children was actually $\$6650 - (7 \times 9 \times \$30) = \$4760$. This figure is of course low, for children did not suddenly become net earners on their ninth birthday, but gradually became so over their childhood. Thus, the woman earned her master a total of $\$4760 + \$2100 = \$6860$.

If that same woman had picked twice as much cotton over the same fifteen year period, but raised only four children, she would have brought her master \$6920, a slightly higher return.

The key is that the master, to maximize his returns, had to keep the children for several picking seasons before selling them. If the 7 children in the first example picked only half a load over 5 years, they would have brought an additional \$4900 into their master's coffer, for a total of \$11,760. The 4 children in the second example, if they picked at the same rate, would have earned only \$2800, for a

total of \$9720. Thus, the master in the first example, other things being equal, such as cost of feeding and clothing the mother and the productivity of the land, would have earned an extra \$2040 per childbearing female slave.

20. Helen Tunnickliff Catterall, ed. Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro 5 vols. (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926-1937), 3:356, Crowder v. Shackelford (1858). George P. Rawick, ed. The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography 19 vols. (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1972-1979), 8, part 2:44-45; George P. Rawick, ed. The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography: Supplement, Series 1 12 vols. (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1977), 8, part 3:1243.

21. This can be tested statistically, for example, by comparing the variance in birth rate for individual farms of varying soil quality and cotton output. The Warren County data is not yet ready for such a test, however.

22. One of the best descriptions of work routines, with careful attention given to differences between large plantations and smaller farms, remains: Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 34-60. For Mississippi see Charles Sackett Sydnor, Slavery in Mississippi (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1933), pp.3-22; and John Hebron Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 77-82.

23. Rawick, ed. The American Slave: Supplement, 10, part 5:280. Allen (James) Plantation Book, pp. 2-4, MDAH.

24. Rawick, The American Slave: Supplement, 6, part 1:172-173; 9, part 4: 1538. On plantation work routines in Warren County, see: Allen plantation book, and the Shugart (Henry Frederick) Account Book/Diary, both in the MDAH, and the Buena Vista Plantation Record and Account Book, Kiger Family Papers, NTC.

25. Sydnor, A Gentleman of the Old Natchez Region, Benjamin L. C. Wailles (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1938), pp. 101-104. Allen Plantation Book, MDAH, pp. 1-2, 62, 93. Buena Vista Plantation Record and Account Book, Kiger Family Papers, box 2E22, folder 4, NTC. The slaves on John A. Quitman's Warren County plantation kept chickens, and sold eggs to their master at twenty cents per dozen: John A. Quitman Papers, NTC. Joseph E. Davis permitted his slave Ben Montgomery to operate a store, which did business with the plantation's several hundred slaves, plus the black and

whites of neighboring farms. Moreover, Montgomery kept his own accounts with New Orleans merchants. See Janet Sharp Hermann, The Pursuit of a Dream (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

26. Isaac Roberts vs. Benjamin L. C. Wailes (1839), Probate Court Minutes Book F, p. 73, Chancery Clerk's Office, Warren County Courthouse, Vicksburg, Mississippi. Accounts of slaves Abram, Charles, Isaac, and several unnamed "boys" with the merchants who did business with E. H. Covington of Fonsylvania Plantation, all dated December, can be found in the Covington's estate papers, Probate Files 301, 531, Chancery Clerk's Office, Warren County Courthouse.

In December, 1857, Benjamin Wailes noted "an Immense throng of negroes in Natchez making their Christmas purchases." No doubt the same could have been said of Warrenton and Vicksburg in Warren County. Sydnor, Gentleman from the Natchez District, p. 103. A French traveller noted that in the Lower Mississippi near New Orleans slaves "raise poultry and hogs but seldom eat either," and instead "prefer selling them, and purchasing from their profits, cloathing and brandy." See Berquin-Duvallon, Travels in Louisiana and the Florida in the Year, 1802, Giving Correct Picture of Those Countries, John Davis trans. (New York: I. Riley, 1806), p. 90.

Masters were more likely to allow slave men than women the privilege of marketing products or to make purchases off the plantation. At the same time, however, care of the gardens, of producing marketable products, fell primarily to the women. Thus, masters extended the gender division that existed within the white household into the slave household as well. Nevertheless, this did not alter what Deborah Gray White has identified as "unusually egalitarian" structure of the slave household, because the slave men did not really control the exchange of goods; slaveowners did. White, Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1985), pp. 158.

27. Several Warren County planters testified in a suit between rival administrators of E.H. Covington's estate, that the Covington slaves could be fed and clothed for \$35 to \$40 per head, by one reckoning, \$65 to \$70 by another. If a slave made \$12 to \$20 from the sale of garden products, then that slave's income equalled 17% to 57% of what his master spent on him. See the Covington estate papers, Probate File 301, WCC.

"Proto-peasantry" is the term used by Sidney W. Mintz to describe the Jamaican slaves who were allowed essentially small farms to raise their own subsistence, thus underwriting the plantation operation. See "Slavery and the Rise of Peasantries," in Historical Reflection/Reflexions Historique: Directions, vol. 1, Roots and Branches: Current

Directions in Slave Studies, Michael Craton, ed. (Toronto: Pergamon Press, 1979), 213-242.

The importance of the gardens for the slaves, especially by comparison with the Jamaican experience, should not be exaggerated, as both Genovese and Fogel warn. By the same token, however, their importance to the master's should not be forgotten. Masters persisted in allowing slaves to tend gardens and market produce, albeit under their strict supervision, during the late-antebellum period when legislatures, fearful of abolitionism and insurrection, tried to end the practice. This last point will be addressed more fully in the final chapter. For general discussions of slave gardens in the U.S., both of which examine the practice from the perspective of the slaves, but I fear miss the significance they had for the planters' household budgets, see: Fogel, Without Consent or Contract, p. 192. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, pp. 535-540.

28. Rawick, The American Slave, Supplement, Series 1, 8, part 3:45. For examples of poisonings, alleged or real, see: Sarah (a slave) v. State (1854) in Catterall, Judicial Cases, 3:337. For a fascinating case in Bolivar County, see George (a slave) v. State (1860) and Josephine (a slave) v. State (1861), Catterall, Judicial Cases, 3:372-376. For barn and gin-house fires that may or may not have been started by Warren County slaves, see: Port Gibson Correspondent, January 10, 1823; Vicksburg Weekly Southern Sun, January 10, 1859 and January 24, 1859. Jesse (a slave) v. State (1854), and Sam (a slave) v. State (1857), Catterall, Judicial Cases, 3:336, 347. Estate Accounts and Inventories, April 1848-July 1850, p. 31, WCC.

29. Estate Accounts and Inventories, April 1848-July 1850, p. 31, WCC. State vs. Wesley, a slave (1859), Warren County Court Files, OCM. State vs. Job and Edmund, Board of Police Minutes Book 1831-1838, pp.30-38, OCM. Vicksburg Register, May 10, 1832.

30. Alfred (a slave) v. State (1859), 37 Miss. 296. See also Catterall, Judicial Cases, 3:362. Alfred's lawyers won a retrial in a new venue on the basis of an impartial jury, but it is not likely that a different jury would have acquitted him.

31. Vicksburg Register, July 14, 1836.

32. George (a slave) v. State (1860) 39 Mississippi 570, and Josephine (a slave) v. State (1861) 39 Mississippi 613. See also Catterall, Judicial Cases, 3:372-376.

33. For a penetrating investigation into personality and individual male responses to slavery, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The Mask of Obedience: Male Slave Psychology in the Old South," American Historical Review 93 (December 1988), 1228-1252.

CHAPTER 6
BROTHERS AND NEIGHBORS:
THE POLITICS OF PATRIARCHY

One warm but windy spring day Benjamin Wailes took a leisurely ride around his neighborhood. From his home at Fonsylvania plantation near the Big Black River he headed southward, over his pasture toward Ivanhoe, an old plantation built by John Stephens forty years earlier, but recently purchased by Wailes for his niece Susan Covington. Susan had lived in the neighborhood as a girl, although she had moved to Natchez when her father died, since then visiting her childhood home infrequently. From Ivanhoe Wailes rode westward to Old Mr. Harris's place, and then on to Doc Hunt's. Finding no one at the doctor's home Wailes ambled through the fields, examining the cluster of Indian mounds south of Hunt's house. Several, he noted "have been ploughed over for a long period and the smaller ones almost obliterated." Wailes continued his tour, heading north at Mrs. Cameron's farm toward the old Valentine plantation. The new owner, a former Vicksburg miller named Austin Mattingly, intercepted the passerby and offered to sell him a load of bricks. The two men settled on a price of eight dollars per

thousand before Wailes rode on, passed Mattingly's quarters and barns, near the large artificial pond graced by magnolia trees, and beyond the brick kiln to a shallow creek, which he followed for perhaps two miles to the church. Bethel Methodist, more commonly known simply as Red Bone church, attracted a large congregation from the neighborhood on most Sundays. Wailes usually attended, although sometimes he visited Antioch Baptist, or on occasion, if the visiting preacher happened to be a favorite, he went to the chapel at Asbury campground. None was particularly close to Fonsylvania, each requiring a journey of about eight or ten miles round trip. One Sunday Wailes arrived at Red Bone after Mr. Drake had already begun his sermon. A large crowd filled the building. Unable to get inside Benjamin listened from a window near the pulpit. After a while he left his station and wandered through the graveyard, among the "large number of handsome monuments," many of which he thought "exhibit considerable taste." He recognized some of the names, including those of several who, like himself, had come to this Warren County neighborhood from Natchez. From Redbone Wailes followed the road back to home, where he found slaves Robert and Alex clipping cedar trees in the yard.¹

If we take a step back from the individual households we see larger social units. In particular we notice rural neighborhoods like the one Benjamin Wailes lived in, spaces

of twenty or thirty square miles containing perhaps two or three dozen households linked by friendship, family, or proximity. During the early years to be sure, but even as late as the start of the Civil War the world for many people began at one's doorstep and ended at the edge of the small cluster of farms and plantations that encircled one's home. In time small villages and towns--urban places--supplanted rural neighborhoods as the spots where people did much of their socializing and conducted the majority of their business, although they never did so entirely. Expanses of wilderness tended to isolate the earliest settlements. Roads, steamboats and railroads, however, eventually broke down geographical barriers between neighborhoods, linking households to distant urban centers. Nevertheless, a mesh of kinship ties formed during the early years connected households and the resources they controlled, and continued to give structure to the rural neighborhood.²

When individuals and families first trickled into the Mississippi Valley they tended to settle in small clusters along rivers and streams, or upon old Indian fields, if there were any nearby, and at the junctions of wilderness pathways. Europeans and their descendants repeated this pattern over and over as they moved across North America. Along the Mississippi River, however, pioneers learned the dangers of situating themselves too close to the water's

edge. In those days there were no levees to keep the river from overflowing its banks; it did so regularly. Much of the most fertile land in the country lay underwater from March through May, and was subjected to flash flooding at any time through the summer. Families built their homes, therefore, on high ground, but as close to the river, to the rich bottom land, as they dared.³

During the 1770s the first white residents of the region that became Warren County settled near the Nanachehaw hills on the Loosa Chitto River. Over the next twenty years the location selected by the original settlers remained popular. By 1800 newcomers had built homes to the north of the Loosa Chitto, along the crude roadway built by the Spanish atop the bluff that ran to the now abandoned Fort Nogales. During the following decade new neighborhoods appeared, where the ridge first approached the river, and at the Walnut Hills. Yet another cluster of farms materialized on a thin strip of high ground bordering the Mississippi adjacent to the upper-most of the Three Islands (Figure 6.1).

In 1809 the legislature for the Territory of Mississippi responded to the growing white and black population between the Loosa Chitto River and Choctaw Indian lands by organizing Warren County. Within ten years farms could be found in the northern most corner of the new county. By 1830 farms had become so numerous as to make

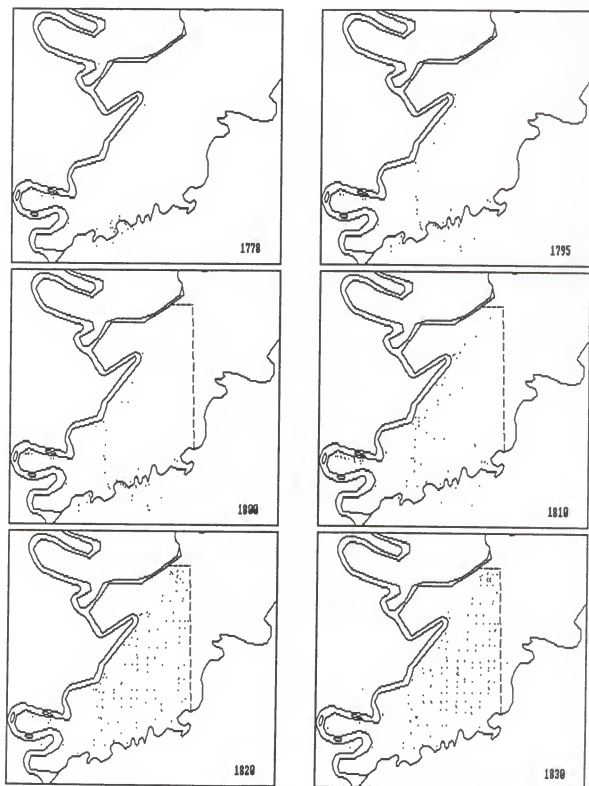


Figure 6-1. Settlement Patterns 1778-1830.

neighborhoods almost indistinguishable. Moreover, the pattern of settlement had changed. The majority of families no longer lived along the edges of the rivers, or even along the bluffs, but chose instead to build their homes on land farther inland, among the cane hills. The extension of roads into the interior both reduced the premium placed on locations adjacent to major water- and roadways and enabled farmers to escape the flooding waters of the Mississippi.

Isolation and economic interdependence kept social relations within Warren County's earliest neighborhoods locally and inwardly oriented. Before 1810 only two or three clusters of households, separated by large expanses of uninhabited territory, specked the four hundred or so square miles of countryside north of the Big Black River. Within these early settlements--the experience of the Rapalje family and their neighbors as discussed in chapter two was typical--people exchanged labor, tools, and produce with one another. They depended on each other for information, for help in times of need, for company. In 1809 a group of farmers along the Bayou Pierre in Claiborne County tried to formalize their interdependence through a "society" organized to promote "the public good individual and public economy," to "bargain contract and purchase for their own use their annual supplies," and to purchase and hold land and slaves. But the objectives listed in the society's charter merely stated the obvious. There was no need for

such formality, and the society lasted but briefly.

Cooperative interdependence, however, continued.⁴

Of course, more than geography, a shared locale, and economic interdependence linked neighboring households. Kinship and friendship also fastened people to one another. Westward migrants tended to travel and settle in groups of associates from their former homes. The Vick and Cook families, for example, together moved to Jefferson County, Mississippi, from Virginia. When after a few years the Cooks moved up river to Warren County the Vicks soon followed, again settling amongst their old friends in the Open Wood neighborhood. The Gibson family migrated in several waves from South Carolina, some settling near Natchez, others at Bayou Pierre, with descendants from both branches eventually resting in the same Warren County neighborhood.

Warren County's rural neighborhoods were not, however, peaceable little kingdoms of family and friends happily and harmoniously working together in some cooperative eden. Isolation and need forced people into associations not always to their liking. Those who lived near family and friends, next door to people whom they both trusted and liked, were fortunate indeed. Those who did not, however, still had to live, work, and trade with people whom they did not know very well, or even disliked. No one had the luxury of associating only with friends. Rather, one either did or did not make friends of those with whom one regularly

associated. When William Stephens killed a hog that wandered into his field his neighbor and owner of the hog, one Jonas Griffin, accused him of stealing it. In his defense Williams freely admitted that he had thrown a hatchet at the animal intending merely to scare it away, but that his aim had been poor, and having killed it albeit quite by accident--the damage already done so to speak--he saw nothing wrong with helping himself to a delicious meal of pork. In another case of hog stealing James Beard, aided by his servants and several hounds, hunted down Thomas McElrath's hogs where they ran in the woods. While McElrath sued Beard in court for damages, another similarly angered neighbor took matters into his own hands, shooting several of Beard's dogs as they attacked his swine. Such bickering and feuding over property could quickly become personal, as happened in yet another case of alleged hog thievery, in which David Pharr by one report "had learned well his father's trade." This slight against character became the issue of dispute, provoking an assault and a suit for libel, although nothing came of that.⁵

Relations between neighbors could be harmonious; they could just as easily be antagonistic. Seldom were they detached. For each household's best interests depended on the mutual cooperation and support of all who lived nearby. It mattered a great deal that everyone lived up to neighborhood expectations. Not surprisingly, failure to do

so incited anger, and sometimes violence. Nevertheless, everyone made a conscious effort to keep relations friendly. Thus, newcomers found themselves warmly welcomed, sometimes even presented with gifts. Cabin raisings were turned into social events. Camp meetings resembled fairs. The slaughtering of a steer, which no family could consume in its entirety before it began to spoil, offered an excuse for a neighborhood barbecue. Such events, in which everyone participated and those who received favors could expect to give next time, stood as reminders of the continued need for cooperation and reciprocity. But so long as people lived so close to one another their relationships would be marked by both amity and enmity, with the need for and expectations of friendship only increasing the likelihood and intensity of hostilities.⁶

With the continued growth of population, and the integration of local economies into a regional trading system, the character and definition of rural neighborhoods changed. The geographical isolation that had distinguished them, and the close cooperation between households that had characterized social relations within them, diminished or disappeared altogether. Where once they had enabled individuals to survive and improve their circumstances in frontier conditions of scarcity, neighborhoods increasingly functioned to serve the property-holding and wealth-accumulating interests of extended kin networks.

By 1830 the once visible clusters of homes disappeared, swallowed by the mass of new farms and plantations that covered the county from top to bottom. Uninhabited terrain no longer separated one settlement from another, for they all ran together. No longer can we see merely by looking at a map of households where one neighborhood ended and another began. Our definition of a neighborhood as a visible cluster of homes will no longer do, unless we are to assume that they no longer existed, however, such a conclusion would be misleading, for Warren County residents continued to refer to the places where they lived as neighborhoods. But if rural neighborhoods persisted as places, at least in the minds of the people who lived within them, how are we to find them, and how are we to know that the places we find were their neighborhoods? We cannot, exactly, but there is enough evidence to allow us to approximate the location and definition of Warren County's rural neighborhoods as their inhabitants saw them.

Evidence indicates that people associated the places where they lived with particular families. More than one document speaks of a Gibson neighborhood, for example, and when isolated on a map family groups do appear in clusters (Figure 6-2). A generation after arriving in Warren County, most members of the Vick family continued to live in the Open Wood neighborhood. The Gibsons gathered in the cane hills region, while the Evans family inhabited the vicinity

of Redbone Creek. Of course, not all family members resided in their "home" neighborhoods; kin-networks typically spilled into precincts generally associated with other people. Moreover, throughout the period under study newcomers unconnected by blood or marriage to any other household built homes in Warren County's rural neighborhoods, around and between such established families as the Vicks, the Gibsons, and the Evans, whose relations did not even account for a majority of homes within their particular vicinities. Network densities, a measurement of interconnectedness, were surprisingly low in each of the three neighborhoods tested, the highest figure indicating that kinship linked a mere twenty percent of the households around the Vick family.⁷ Of course, by reducing the size of each neighborhood we can obtain higher densities. However, in doing so we would be assuming that by associating neighborhoods with particular families Warren County residents had in their minds places where kinship connected nearly all nearby households. However, the Gibsons referred to a place that took their name but that extended well beyond the homes of their kin. The dotted line in Figure 6-2 represents the border for the Gibson family as it might have been presumed had their own testimony not indicated that they understood their neighborhood to have included the territory within the solid line. Thus, while rural neighborhoods took on the identity of particular families,

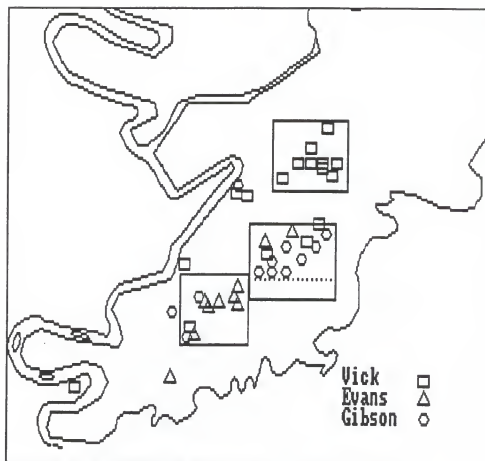


Figure 6-2. Family Groupings.

those families did not confine themselves to a particular place, nor did they exclude non-relations from them.

The development of family connections between nearby households grew naturally out of the conditions in which the early settlers found themselves. Affiliation with anyone other than one's nearest neighbors was difficult. Roads were really no more than paths barely wide enough for a person on horseback, broken by sharp hills and steep ravines, and by unbridged streams and rivers. Lorenzo Dow, the Methodist preacher who built a crude home between the Big Black River

and the Bayou Pierre, told how "once he met three animals, when going to a neighboring house, upon a by-way, which he hacked out through the cane; he told them to get out, and chinked his tins together; one took to the left and two to the right a few feet, and he passed between, then they closed behind." Upon reaching his neighbor's house Dow "enquired if Mr. Neal had been there, having seen his bull dogs. The family on hearing their description, replied that they were wolves!"⁸ Faced with such conditions men and women, more often than not, found spouses close to home. The difficulties of travelling kept contact with outsiders to a minimum. Moreover, so long as there remained plenty of vacant land nearby, children tended to settle alongside parents. Within a few generations, nearby households became enmeshed in interlocking networks of kinship.

The conjunction of family with neighborhood, and the place of both within antebellum southern society, can easily be misunderstood. Farm households settled as groups in western peripheries of the North as well as the South. Pioneers in both regions alleviated conditions of hardship and isolation by building homes nearby one another. With time, kinship connected households in Illinois just as surely as it did in Mississippi. Thus, there was nothing inherently significant or special, and certainly nothing particularly "southern," about southern neighborhoods in either their pattern of settlement or in their development

of family networks. But a single extended family could, and in Warren County they frequently did, control most of the land and labor, slave labor in particular, for several miles around them, and this most assuredly gave a distinctly southern structure and meaning to the South's rural neighborhood. While northern farmers had access to the labor of their wives and children, plus a few wards perhaps--minors left by deceased relations--and of course the occasional hired hand, that simply did not compare to the southern planters' access to slaves, those owned outright as well as those owned by kin. Moreover, the power and status that came with wealth made for a distinctly Southern politics of patriarchy for which rural neighborhoods were the main arenas. A particular family's property holdings, and the influence that gave them within their neighborhood, more than just the size of the clan or the fact that kinship connected several though never a majority of households, were responsible for the association of family with place. Property and power gave certain families notoriety beyond their numbers.⁹

Each neighborhood had its one or two leading families. At the center of each family stood one or two men who were, in effect, the leaders not only of their respective clans but also of their neighborhood.¹⁰ Personally wealthier than the average Warren County household head, clan patriarchs also had direct access to the considerable wealth held by

the other members of their families. To begin with, they already owned, on average, sixteen slaves and nearly four hundred acres of land, four times the slave- and land-holding average of all Warren County household heads. In addition, their families, of which these men stood at the center, collectively owned an average of sixty-three slaves and fourteen hundred acres. The clustering of families within the space of small neighborhoods, moreover, meant that their combined property lay close at hand, and frequently adjoined, enabling several households to combine their resources into single operations.

Patriarchs, by virtue of their status as such, often acquired direct control over the property of other family members. Elijah and James Pace, for example, served as executors of their father's estate, which placed in their hands their own inheritances as well as those of their minor siblings. For four years Elijah supplemented his own labor force with 3 slaves that belonged to his younger brother Lorenzo. James Hyland personally owned a modest amount of property, 5 slaves and 200 acres, but also controlled 640 acres and 7 slaves as administrator of his deceased brother Christopher's estate. In addition, he acquired upon the death of his wife's brother-in-law partial interest in another 350 acres and 10 slaves. In another example, John Lane wrestled the executorship of the sizeable legacy left by his father-in-law Newit Vick from two other heirs, and

became the indomitable head of the largest and wealthiest family in the north end of Warren County. All of the Vick family, and all the families that married into it, waited over ten long years before Lane finally distributed what remained of the estate among its rightful heirs. Lane almost singlehandedly built Vicksburg, lining his own pockets in the meantime with profits that the deceased Vick had intended for his children.¹¹

Of course, patriarchal control of family property did not go unchallenged, although much of the time their was little the discontented could do. Catherine Chamberlain was furious when she discovered that the four thousand dollars left her by her deceased husband was to be managed by her brother-in-law, that she would receive only the interest as an annual allowance until she remarried. Doubtless concerned about whether anyone would marry her with this arrangement, and obviously frustrated by her lack of control over her own affairs Chamberlain at first complained to her guardian, and then threatened to decline the interest forever if she could not have her way. "I will have nothing to do with the interest," she promised, "and I will be destitute indeed, and do God only knows what, in my present feeble health." The brother-in-law was not moved.¹² Benjamin Cook and his new bride Ann received a wedding gift of four slaves from her father just before they left Virginia for Mississippi. The father, however, did not give them direct control of

their gift, but rather placed it in the hands of Foster Cook, Benjamin's older brother and leader of a large Warren County clan. The young couple were to receive an allowance raised from the hiring of the slaves. Moreover, Ann's father reserved the right to reclaim the property at any time, and if he should die intestate, Foster Cook was to continue as the slaves' keeper.¹³

Rivals of approximate status and power could mount serious challenges to patriarchal authority, although at risk of tearing their family apart. As leader of his family Stephen Gibson assumed the duties of administrator of the estate left by his deceased brother Nathaniel, and of the property left to his nephews and niece. Although he permitted his wards, and their slaves, to live with Nathaniel's widow even after she remarried, Gibson moved immediately upon the woman's death to bring all of the estate, especially the slaves, under his direct control. Green Caston, the widowed second husband who had had tacit control over the property while his wife was alive, proved reluctant to turn it over, forcing Gibson to go to Caston's farm and seize his wards' property. Caston, aided by his brother Seth, the affairs of both in "declining circumstances," stole them back and carried them to Texas, where they intended to sell them out of the country and, they hoped, out of the reach of Gibson influence. Stephen Gibson, and following his death brother James, pursued the

Castons in court, impounding their Warren County farm until they received the slaves plus twelve hundred dollars damages.

James Gibson had less success in winning court approval in his bid for control of brother Stephen's property, but he did not let that stop him. Martha, Stephen's widow, remarried one Patrick Sharkey, who successfully defeated James Gibson's challenges for possession of the estate. The court preferred to keep children together with their mothers, whom they trusted with whatever property the children had coming to them. But step-fathers, having no familial stake in the welfare of their wife's children, proved less reliable. In this case, however, Sharkey, unlike Caston, commanded some respect and faith in his financial abilities, and in his intentions to do right by his wife's children. He came from an established family of prosperous farmers, and was well connected to some of the wealthiest and most politically powerful planter families in the county. There was no reason for the court to fear he would perform his duties as guardian in any way but responsibly. Nevertheless, James Gibson, who perhaps feared Sharkey as an increasingly influential rival within his neighborhood, rejected the court's ruling and took matters into his own hands, removing six slaves from Sharkey's quarters. Sharkey had Gibson arrested on charges of slave stealing, a serious offence for which a jury found the defendant not guilty.

Upon his release Gibson, still unwilling to let the matter go, sued Sharkey for libel, claiming that the suit for theft had tarnished his reputation. Perhaps sensing that the affair was getting out of control--Gibson possessed a hot head, which resulted in his demise in a duel several years later--Sharkey wisely left Mississippi for Texas, whereupon the court placed the estate in the hands of a third party respected by both men. Gibson may not have won his battle entirely, but he did gain a partial victory when he forced his opponent to surrender control of the property in question despite the probate court's very clear decision in Sharkey's favor.

Perhaps the greatest turmoil occurred during the succession crises that followed the deaths of family leaders, particularly if they failed to leave written instructions in the form of a will to dictate how their property was to be handled, and who was to take command. When the sheriff seized for debt a portion of James Hyland's land plus one of his slaves Hyland turned to his older brother Jacob, leader of the family since the death of their father. When the land came up for public auction only Jacob showed up to bid. Prior to the sale he had publicly announced his intention to buy his brother's property and to hold it for him until he could afford to buy it back. As he had hoped, several neighbors who had expressed an interest in the property demonstrated their respect for Jacob and his

motives by holding their tongues. Thus the auction was, as a member of the Hyland family observed, "not a bonafide but a sham sale," in which James Hyland's creditors received considerably less than the market value for the land and the slave that were supposed to compensate them for the bad debt. Moreover, the property remained in the hands of James Hyland, or at least he continued to work the slave and the acreage as before; Jacob held the deeds. James Hyland, in his efforts to quickly convert his rich bottom land into a productive cotton plantation, continued to borrow money, only to over-extend himself at least once more. As before his brother Jacob came to his aid, again saving another portion of property from public auction. Eventually, James transferred all his property to his brother.¹⁴

Suddenly, within a year of each other, both men died. Neither one left a will. Further complicating matters, their agreement had never been put in writing. Frances Hyland, James's widow, beseeched her in-laws to uphold the original understanding, for if Jacob had lived, she pleaded, he would certainly have acted "with good faith & integrity & would not have made use of the unbounded confidence" that James "reposed in him as a brother & neighbor for the purpose of defrauding & injuring" him. Initially Jacob's widow and brother-in-law, administrators of the estate, agreed, but then abruptly changed their minds, deciding instead to consolidate the Hyland plantations. They evicted Frances and

her children, who presumably went to live with her brother, and tore apart James's house, pulling down the chimney, lifting up the floor, and removing bricks, boards, and all other fixtures to their own residence. While Frances implored them to respect the sacred trust between brothers, between kin, Jacob's heirs slaughtered the stock of hogs and much of the cattle that still ran in James Hyland's pastures. To Frances and her chief ally William Knowland, her son from an previous marriage, the behavior of Jacob's administrators was nothing less than "sordid and selfish." And so it seems, accept that there was more to this dispute than at first appears.

James Hyland had acquired some prime cotton land upon his marrying Frances Knowland. When he transferred his land to his brother Jacob, William Knowland therefore lost what would have been his had his mother not remarried. William further entangled himself with the Hyland family when he married his step-sister, a daughter of James Hyland's from a previous marriage. Martha Ann, William's bride, died within a year of their marriage, but not before presenting him with a baby girl. William Knowland thus laid claim to part of his father-in-law's estate in the name of his daughter, who was, after all, a Hyland. But she was also a Knowland. Frances's protests to the contrary notwithstanding, she and her son perhaps showed more concern for Knowlands than Hylands. Their failure to procure the support of James's adult

children in their cause--his minor heirs, whom Frances claimed to represent, could not legally speak for themselves--stood in marked contrast to their success in winning to their side several of his hungry creditors. Jacob's heirs, who sought only to keep Hyland property in Hyland hands, could claim to be the true guardians of the whole family.

Obviously, self interest motivated both sides of this dispute, just as it had the original agreement between James and Jacob Hyland. Yet both sides of the Hyland family acted on behalf of themselves and in the name of the whole family. No one openly challenged the sanctity of kinship, for without its bonds, and the trust individuals placed in them, James Hyland would have lost his land long before he died, and the whole family would have been the poorer for it. Once the dust settled the family was more united than before. Matilda, Jacob's widow, successfully warded off all claimants to the family plantation, preserving it for the Hylands who own it still.

The essence of neighborhood politics, both within and between extended family groups, was the struggle for control over resources. People strived to maintain and build upon their holdings of land and slaves, and used whatever influence they possessed to this end. In their endeavors family was crucial. Property and power went hand in hand. Families, by deferring to the leadership of certain

individuals, and by granting them access to their land and slaves, enhanced the power of the patriarch, who in return used his influence to protect the interests of the entire clan. Years after the Civil War Mississippi historian J. F. H. Claiborne remembered the Gibson clan as "numerous, intelligent, generally esteemed, wealthy and most of them members of the church." That they were numerous is certain. However, the very size of the clan would have prohibited him from knowing them all sufficiently well to accurately attest to their intelligence, or the regularity of their attendance at church. He was wrong in thinking them all wealthy. But Claiborne based his impressions of the Gibsons on his encounters with its leaders. If family and name carried some special meaning in the Old South it was because the wealth, power, and respect given the patriarch extended in no small way to all who shared his name, for it was they who, collectively, made him what he was.

One might have expected public officials, judges in particular, to have settled such disputes. By law responsibility for the appointment of guardians and administrators lay with the county probate court, which sought individuals who had a stake in the estate in question, and whose personal history and circumstances demonstrated a certain fiscal acumen and responsibility. Such individuals did not have to be family members. In practice, however, older sons, brothers, and uncles--the

leading men--best fulfilled the court's criteria. But when such leading men challenged each other the courts were quite unable to arbitrate, for power rested not with them ultimately but with the patriarchs within each family and neighborhood. This is not to say that the Hylands or James Gibson subverted or undermined the authority of the law and the court. Their behavior was in no way illegitimate, for law and the power to enforce it came from within their neighborhoods, from themselves. If the formal authority of public office was not exactly illegitimate either, its influence was certainly secondary. Power, the ability to make and execute decisions that affect others, rested first and foremost in the hands of Warren County's leading property holders. Public office, elected or otherwise, did not on its own allow one the authority to over-rule decisions already hammered out in big house parlors of ruling patriarchs scattered around the county. Probate judges, and public officials in general, whether located in the county courthouse or state capital, tended to confirm, rather than establish, the social order that evolved within each family and neighborhood. They risked repudiation when they tried to do otherwise. The litigiousness of Warren County's residents attests to their willingness to try to settle disputes in court. But they were quick to ignore jurors' rulings whenever they did not meet neighborhood expectations. Politics started in the neighborhoods,

informally, face-to-face, personally.

Just as kin competed and sometimes conflicted with each other over control of resources within the family, different clans competed for access to resources within the neighborhood. People debated and decided questions of local development, where to place churches, levees, or roads and fences, and while official authority for such neighborhood projects as road building came from the county government in practice neighbors worked out arrangements before they petitioned officials for permission to carry out their plans. Only once during the 1830s, the earliest decade for which there remain records for county supervisors, did a group of household heads, deadlocked on a question of where to place a road, seek mediation from county officials. The board told the men to resolve the problem on their own, which they did.¹⁵

Unfortunately, the limited role of county government prevented the process of neighborhood decision-making from being recorded in the official record. What seems clear, however, particularly for matters of local economic development, is that the family patriarchs who owned the largest land- and slaveholdings dominated neighborhood politics. They were more likely to own the land across which a road would be built, or to possess the most feasible spot on a river for a ferry. With their slaves, they provided the bulk of the labor needed to complete projects. Sometimes

they donated their resources to the local community, as only they could afford to do. Gabriel Griffin and Moses Evans, for example, each set aside a portion of their plantations for churches. Newit Vick also built a church on his large estate, and then urged his neighbors to attend sermons that he preached. In 1810 Jacob Hyland allowed Warren County's first court to hold sessions in a building on his plantation until a permanent seat of justice could be selected.¹⁶

Poorer families stood to benefit from churches and roads. Limited in resources needed to complete such undertakings, however, they depended on their wealthier kin and neighbors, and so naturally yielded to them on matters of local development.

Through their command of land and labor during these years of scarce capital wealthy planters won the deference of those who lived around them, especially of dependent relations, whose interests they claimed to represent. Of course, patriarchal authority did not always go unchallenged within neighborhoods anymore than it did within families. But the structures of local society, the informality and closeness of life in a small place, almost guaranteed that such challenges would be taken personally, and settled violently if need be. Jimmy Tyler and Claudius Rawls settled the "ill feeling" between them, which came to a head during a debate over locating or funding a school, first with words, then fisticuffs, and finally sword canes.¹⁷ An

argument between John Deminds and Lewis Pennel turned into a shoot-out when Deminds armed seven of his slaves, making of them a small militia, and surrounded Pennel's house. At first the slave army tried to lift up the cabin and overturn it, but when that failed they proceeded to blast it with firepower. Pennel, to his good fortune, had observed their approach and escaped out the back of his home without notice.¹⁸ D. H. Baker killed his "near neighbor" Dr. William Monett in a duel fought for reasons not known.¹⁹ In all cases someone pressed charges, and thus the record of the incident exists, but nothing came of them, and the defendants found themselves quickly released, for the score had already been settled. Justice was done.

James Gibson and Anthony Durden squared off in one of Warren County's most famous duels. The cause of the fight is not known, exactly, but it probably began when Durden, who was married to Gibson's sister, assumed the duties of administrator of Jordan Gibson's estate. Almost immediately there arose a dispute over the ownership of a slave. Gibson's loss to one of Durden's kinsmen in a recent election for state senator probably did not help their relationship. Bad feelings came to a head one evening at Mr. Lindsey's supper room, at Clinton in Hinds County. According to witnesses the two were seated opposite each other at the table when Gibson declared that "one or the other would dye [sic] before they left this place." "They both rose from

their seats & walked towards the upper end of the table," where "each one drew their swords from their canes and commenced thrusting at Each other." Several dinner guests tried to break up the fight by grabbing Durden and pinning him against the wall, but when Gibson continued jabbing at his helpless opponent they had to let him defend himself. "In a few moments Gibson fell," mortally wounded. Friends carried him home to Warren County where he slowly bled to death. (For the next eighty years or more descendants kept the carpet stained with Gibson's blood in the home where he died.) The state prosecuted Durden for murder, but a jury acquitted him.²⁰

The cause of the fight probably boiled down to a simple rivalry between two leading families, the Gibsons and the Vicks, that began when Durden, the son of a Vick, married Mary Elizabeth Gibson. James Gibson, very much aware of the Vick family's standing, may have feared the influence Durden would have within the Gibson clan. In any case, this was no matter for the court to decide. James Gibson was himself a judge, indeed, he was the judge of probate who had awarded control of Jordan Gibson's estate to Anthony Durden, no doubt with the expectations that in doing so his wishes as patriarch of the Gibson clan would be respected, but that if he had trouble keeping his upstart son-in-law in line the gavel would be useless, that he would have to use the sword, for power lay in the person, not the office. Durden would

not be intimidated. The judge did what he had to do--fight the man or else surrender some of his authority as family leader, to a man from a rival family no less.²¹

The ineffectiveness, almost irrelevance, of official authority in neighborhood affairs did not make for anarchy. Order came from the bottom up, from the material and social structures within the small places in which people lived. The intimacy of rural neighborhood and family life made formal authority unnecessary, even impractical. Instead there evolved an unwritten set of ideas of right behavior, expectations really, in the form of what historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown has identified as the code of honor. The duels, the violence, did not signify a lack of order; they attested to its existence. As the conditions and the context for the patriarchal family neighborhood disappeared, however, so too did the old ideas.

New patterns of trade, plus continuing economic development, sparked changes in the county's political structures, curtailing the authority of some, enhancing that of others. Residents from all neighborhoods came to have vested interests in development far beyond their immediate vicinity, something they had not had earlier. The location of roads in the north end of the county could be a matter of consequence to planters in the south end. Likewise, the rates charged by ferry operators along the Big Black caught the attention of merchants in growing urban areas. In short,

economic development transformed neighborhood business and politics into county business and politics. Wealthy land- and slave-holders now confronted one another from across a larger territory, and to do this they turned to the courts. The consequences of change on neighborhood and family life is apparent in an incident involving, again, the Gibson family.

On an August day in 1836 Levi Gibson, two of his cousins, and several of their cronies rode up to Keziah Griffin's home. Their visit probably came as no surprise to Mrs. Griffin, not if she had heard that one of Levi's slaves had been found dead. The men demanded that she and her family leave the neighborhood. They warned the woman of the consequences should she refuse. Heeding her neighbors' threats, Keziah fled across the Mississippi River, her daughter with her, to join kin in Louisiana. Elijah, her son, stayed behind to take his chances with the Gibsons, who returned a few days later with a horsewhip and persuaded the boy that he, too, should leave.²²

Trouble began two or three months earlier. Keziah's horse had wandered into Levi's fields. Legally, she was not responsible; Gibson should have erected fences. But the law, the written law in any case, had no business here. An owner of twenty-three slaves, which placed him in the richest ten percent of Warren County tax payers, and a member of the neighborhood's ruling family, Levi did as he pleased, and so

he shot Keziah's horse. When next the woman's hogs strayed into his yard he had his overseer chase them away with hounds that relished the taste of bacon. Neither Levi, his family, nor even his slaves, however, treated Keziah Griffin, a propertyless widow, in the manner that people of her status had come to expect from patriarchal authority figures. Dispute differences in status and influence between some neighbors, their relationship maintained, ideally, a balance understood through notions of paternalism. Men like Levi Gibson expected the deference and respect of women like Keziah Griffin, who looked to them for leadership and protection; he in return had to perform his duty by living up to her expectations. He had failed to do so. He and his kin persisted in using a short-cut between their several plantations, over the woman's objections, until they had worn a road through her field. Much maligned Keziah promised "that she would have satisfaction," and that Levi Gibson "need not be surprised if he found a thousand dollar negro dead in the road some time or other." Then the dead slave turned up in the lane-way.²³

When Levi Gibson and his cousins kicked Keziah Griffin out of their neighborhood, they handled the affair the way a local ruling family might have been expected. And they were the ruling family, their farms and plantations completely surrounding Mrs. Griffin (Figure 6-3). But their claim to the roles of prosecutor, judge, and jury--probably more so

than the violence--was losing legitimacy. The structure of social relations had already changed enough to cause people to question the authority that planter clans like the Gibsons had enjoyed within the vicinity of their homes. Levi Gibson perhaps sensed his authority was slipping away, and overreacted by treating Keziah Griffin so harshly. He and his family certainly worried about how their behavior looked to people outside their neighborhood. In an earlier day they would not have cared, but in this case they lacked the confidence that they had acted properly, and felt

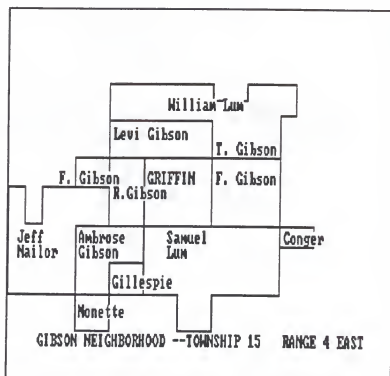


Figure 6-3. The Gibsons and Their Kin Surrounding Keziah Griffin

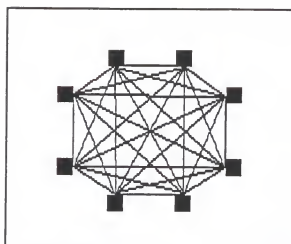
Sources: Sectional Index, Township 15, Range 4 East, Chancery Clerk's Office, Warren County Courthouse, Vicksburg.

compelled to justify their actions in an unusual but telling notice published in the Vicksburg newspaper. "To the Public," read the headline. "This publication is to show the cause of the expelling of Mrs. Griffin and family from the neighborhood." Their idea of patriarchy, of the family neighborhood, seemed out of date. Their apology was in vain. Keziah and her son filed suits against their antagonists. For five years they sought retribution in court while witnesses, subpoenaed on their behalf, habitually failed to appear, forcing them to delay action until the next session six months later, when again witnesses would not be found. Gradually, the Griffins gathered support from around the county until finally several of the Gibsons themselves, awakening to the changes that had undermined their family's privileged position, turned against kin and testified on behalf of the plaintiffs. Keziah Griffin and her son won their suit, and over \$6,000 in damages. They did not return to Warren County.²⁴

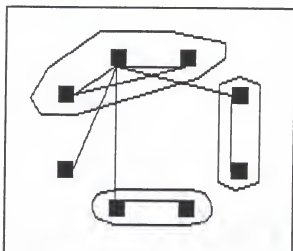
The change in relations between households within the county's rural neighborhoods is summarized in three ideal-type models of exchange relations shown in Figure 4. The first model diagrams the early neighborhoods of pioneer households. Ideally, none had any particular advantage over the others in access to resources, but rather each depended upon the contributions of all. Isolation and cooperative exchange linked each household directly to all others in the

group. In the terms of network analysis, each household was structurally equivalent. The second model shows the changes in exchange patterns that occurred with the formation of clans, and the pooling of resources by kin-groups. The patriarch of the wealthiest family, however, continued to interact economically with other families, for he could provide them with essential services, such as ginning, or access to credit. In return, he won respect and reverence as neighborhood leader. The third diagram portrays the breakdown of associations between and within families as households acquired more of the wherewithal to free them of dependence upon others, and as outsiders, urban merchants in particular, provided services formerly supplied by neighborhood leaders. Kinship ties remained, linking households as before, but their significance diminished when they no longer corresponded with economic associations.

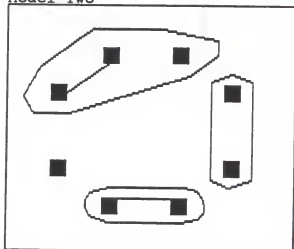
The one constant through all phases of development was place, and as places, as pieces of common ground, the neighborhoods in which people spent most of their lives provided some continuity over time in the face of ongoing change. They smoothed transitions, linked households that otherwise had nothing joining them, and even connected the present with the past, the living with the dead. Benjamin Wailes had only lived at Fonsylvania five years when he took his ride around his neighborhood. His business ties were mostly with merchants in Natchez where he still maintained a



Model One



Model Two



Model Three

Figure 6-4. Three Models of Relations Between Households Within Rural Neighborhoods.

home. But he had had kin here for three decades, and had visited regularly before actually moving in. As he rode around the place in which he lived he felt a part of the community and its history. Among the Indian mounds, at plantations still known by the names of bygone owners, at the cemetery where he discovered the graves of former associates, he could sense the presence of the past, his past. "The memorials of perishing humanity speak to the living and proclaim the certainty of death," he wrote in his diary on the occasion of his wandering through Red Bone cemetery. In a sense neighborhoods had become little more than a collection of memorials speaking to all who cared to listen.²⁵

Notes

1. Wailes (B. L. C.) Diary Typescripts, 7 March 1860, 22 February 1857, MDAH. Additional information on the neighbors Wailes mentioned comes from the Study Data.
2. Wailes Diary, 22 February 1857.
3. For similar patterns of settlement elsewhere in the South, see: Robert C. Kenzer, Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881 (University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1987), pp. 10-11; and Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1640-1740 (New York, 1985), pp. 53-59. On the particular pattern of settlement in the Lower Mississippi Valley, as indicated by early maps, see: Milton B. Newton, Jr., "Mapping the Foundations of the Old Natchez District: The Wilton Map of 1774," in Natchez Before 1830, Noel Polk, ed. (University Press of Mississippi: Jackson and London, 1989), pp. 84-87.
4. Hamilton, "Planters' 'Society'," pp. 69-70.

5. Territory vs. Stephens (1810), Warren County Court Files, OCHM; Thomas K. McElrath vs. James Beard (1820), James Beard vs. William Jordan (1820), David Pharr vs. Royal Pace (1820), Royal Pace vs. David Pharr (1820), Superior Court Record Book, Warren County, September 1818-March 1821, OCHM.

6. George C. Osborn, "Plantation Life in Central Mississippi as Revealed in the Clay Sharkey Papers," Journal of Mississippi History 3 (October 1941), 281-282. Frances Allen Cabaniss and James Allen Cabaniss, "Religion in Antebellum Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History 6 (January-October 1944), 212.

7. Study Data. The network densities for the Gibson and Evans neighborhoods were considerably lower, 6% and 5% respectively. On network analysis and measuring network density see: David Knoke and James H. Kuklinski, Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, vol. 28, Network Analysis (Beverly Hill, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1982); and Darrett B. Rutman, "Community Study," Historical Methods 13 (1980), 29-41.

8. Lorenzo Dow, History of Cosmopolite; The Four Volumes of Lorenzo Dow's Journal . . . (Cincinnati: Joshua Martin, 1848), 310.

9. Robert Kenzer, for example, has described the rural kin-neighborhood as "a basic unit of southern culture." See his Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), especially chapter one; quotation from p.1. Kenzer is guilty of the type of circular argument that plagues most efforts to identify the distinguishing traits of southern culture: The settlers of Orange County, North Carolina built tightly-knit family neighborhoods because that was the way southerners lived; that they lived in such neighborhoods distinguished them as southerners. But according to John Mack Faragher, in the community of Sugar Creek, Illinois, "kinship provided an organizing force which brought farmers together." See Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 151. Moreover, Faragher also points out how "intermarriage facilitated the retention and concentration of family property." (p. 145). The difference between northern and southern neighborhoods, therefore, lay not in the strength of their association with families, nor even in the tendency of certain kin groups to pool local resources, but rather in the type of property involved. As the following discussion will make clear, slavery made all the difference.

10. The household heads with the highest degree, that is, having connections to the highest number of other members of the network, were considered, for the purposes at hand, to have been extended family heads. For a discussion of degree of point, a simple descriptive statistic used by network analysts, see: Knoke and Kuklinski, Network Analysis 1982), p. 45. See Appendix C, Table C-5 for a summary of wealth holding of household heads with highest degrees relative to other Warren County heads of household.

11. Warren County Tax Rolls, 1830, Warren County Records, MDAH; Orphans' Court Record Book A, pp. 216, 354, 412, 419, 425-426, 523, OCHM; and Orphans' Court Record Book B, p. 223, and Book C, p. 67, WCC; John W. Vick, et al. vs. Mayor and Aldermen of Vicksburg (1838), High Court of Errors and Appeals, RG 32, vol. 92, pp.417-557, MDAH.

12. C. M. Chamberlain to D. Maynadier & Co., March 25, 1853, Sharkey (William Lewis) Papers, box 2E509, folder 3, NTC.

The significance of patriarchal authority and the pattern of concentration of family property in the hands of male leaders of extended families raises questions about the egalitarian patterns of wealth distribution some historians claim prevailed in planter families in other regions of the South. See for example: Jane Turner Censer, North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

13. Deed book C, pp. 141-143, WCC.

14. The example of the Hyland family comes from papers filed in the following law suit: Hyland vs. Hyland (1832) Superior Court of Chancery, RG 32, SG 1, Case # 210, MDAH.

15. County Board of Police Minutes, 1831-1838, pp. 102-103, OCHM.

16. John G. Jones, A Complete History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 2 vols. (Baton Rouge: Claiborne's Book Store, 1966 [1887 and 1908]), 1:57, 59, 346-347. Statutes of the Mississippi Territory (Natchez, 1816), p. 99.

17. Ellen Hyland to sister, n.d., Chamberlain-Hyland-Gould Family Papers, box 2E508, NTC.

18. State vs. Deminds and Chambers (1839), Warren County Court Records, OCHM.

19. Vicksburg Register, April 3, 1834.

20. Orphans Court Book B, p. 230. Daniel Whitaker, admin., vs. Anthony Durden (1830?), County Court Papers, box 53, in the attic of the WCC. Anthony Durden Murder Trial (1829) Papers, NTC. Cynthia Warriner, comp. "Gibson Families of Western Mississippi," unpublished genealogy, OCHM.

21. James Gibson served as a justice of the peace in Warren County from 1821 to 1826 when he was appointed judge of probate. Register of Appointments, County Officers, Series A, Volume N, roll # 2108, MDAH.

22. Griffin v. Gibson, County Court Papers, box 94, in the attic of the WCC. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, September 1, 1836.

23. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, September 1, 1836. Tax Rolls, 1835, Warren County Records, MDAH.

24. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, September 1, 1836. Griffin v. Gibson, County Court Papers, box 94, in the attic of the WCC. Vicksburg Daily Whig, October 24, 1845, reported that E. D. Griffin was awarded \$6000.00 damages plus costs of \$497.60.

25. Wailes diary (typescript), p. 15.

CHAPTER 7
HAMLETS AND TOWNS: THE URBAN PROCESS

By 1860 nearly half the population of Warren County, numbering eight thousand, lived in or nearby Warren County's only incorporated city.¹ Vicksburg: The public wharf crammed with steamboats, barges, and pirogues so that much of the city's business district actually floated upon the Mississippi; Levee Street clogged at certain times of the year with wagons, stacks of cotton bales, and discharged freight so "that a man could scarcely get about on horseback"; avenues ascending steep hills and lined with stores, restaurants, taverns, small manufacturing businesses, and law offices; hilltop mansions with names that betrayed the self-importance of their owners--The Castle, Belmont; an imposing new courthouse with massive columns on all sides, built by slaves but symbolic of the power of the masters, standing like the Parthenon with a whole civilization at its feet. Vicksburg was by the end of the antebellum era the center of Warren County society. But it was not the county's only urban place.²

Another two hundred or so people lived in the half dozen villages that dotted the surrounding countryside. They stood as reminders of Vicksburg's humble beginnings. Warrenton, Red Bone, Redwood, Bovina, Mt. Albon, Oak Ridge. Such places consisted of little more than a church, one or two stores that doubled as taverns, perhaps a blacksmith shop, and maybe a post office. Some hamlets had a cotton gin and warehouse established by a local planter who made his facilities available to friends and neighbors. These hamlets might appear as little more than meeting places within rural neighborhoods, and thus perhaps not truly urban at all. Yet, as a public landing at the river, or a train station, or a simple fork in the road such locales betrayed an urban function and process that set them apart from surrounding farms and plantations. Like the clearly identifiable cities, most especially Vicksburg, the country villages served as gathering places for rural people and produce, as collectors of goods and information, as points in a chain that stretched upward and outward from farm households to New Orleans, to New York, and finally to the great cities of Europe.

As centers for the collection of agricultural products and the distribution of manufactured goods, southern villages and towns grew out of the countryside that surrounded them. They were as much a part of southern society as the farm and plantation. Nevertheless, as

contemporary observers and modern historians have pointed out, the Old South was not urban like the North. An economy rooted in agriculture, a low population density, and an attachment to slavery that prevented the development of a consumer market and a manufacturing sector left the South with fewer and smaller cities and towns than in the free states. Still, southern society had its urban dimension, although historians looking for towns and cities of several thousand or more people, like those more common in the North during the antebellum years, have not appreciated this point as much as they might have had they looked for southern, not northern, urban places.³ Function more than geography distinguished urban from rural in the southern states, where urban places consisted essentially of clusters of households. Their inhabitants made a living in some way other than by farming, usually by offering marketing or manufacturing services to rural farm households.⁴

Staring into the wilderness, Warren County's first settlers envisioned a capital city that would be the economic, political, and cultural center of their colony. They never realized that dream. That they even had such a dream, however, is significant. It demonstrates the equation in their minds of civilization and urbanization. As the forests disappeared before fields and furrows rather than blocks and buildings the vision of an urban civilization

persisted nevertheless. At no time did Warren County's rural residents express any antipathy toward the towns that did eventually appear, nor did they ever stop laying plans for more urban places.

Beginning in 1810 with the establishment of Warren County and its seat of government, Warrenton, town building commenced, proceeded in earnest during the 1830s with the rush of population into the area, and continued up to the Civil War. Elias Hankinson offered for sale lots in a town he laid out on his plantation on the south side of the Big Black River. He found no buyers. After a fire consumed his gin and warehouse, along with one hundred and fifty bales of cotton, Hankinson sold his plantation, purchased some new acreage across the river in Warren County, and tried again. There he established Mount Vernon. It, too, never amounted to much more than a cluster of small farms and a post office, although it made its way onto several state maps. Meanwhile, at the opposite end of the county Thomas Redwood laid off lots for the new village of Carthage. This enterprise proved more successful. By 1850 Carthage, or Redwood as it came to be known, had two stores and a post office. In addition, a cluster of non-agricultural workers--two carpenters and a dozen raftsmen who plied the nearby Yazoo River--kept homes in this place. At Warren County's eastern extreme lay Bridgeport, while at the far western extreme, on the Louisiana side of the Mississippi, lay



Figure 7-1. Villages and Towns
In and Around Warren County,
1810-1860.

Tuscambia. Both places existed more in the minds of their founders than they ever did in reality. The same was true of DeSoto, across the river from Vicksburg. That its streets lay most of the year under water did not seem to discourage its founders. In 1819 Warren County's most successful town founder, Newit Vick, marked off a grid in one of his cotton fields and sold a lot later that same year. Vicksburg very quickly became the largest urban place in the county, and second largest in the state behind Natchez.⁵

Few of Warren County's towns developed much beyond the planning stage. All efforts to the contrary, Warren County society remained essentially rural, at least until late in the antebellum period. So long as material conditions--plantation economy and low population density in particular--precluded the rise of urban areas, the ambitions of town

founders remained unfulfilled.⁶ With the exception of Vicksburg, the most successful urban places in and around Warren County--successful in the sense that they achieved some measure of permanency--arose on their own, evolving out of the countryside without any prior planning, appearing when a local agricultural population, in order to continue to increase its interaction with the national and international economy, required a central place for processing, shipping, and receiving goods travelling to and from distant markets. Predicting when and where such a stage of development was about to occur required the talents of Cassandra.

Prior to the appearance of villages and small towns planters, particularly those located on waterways, performed urban functions for their neighbors, ginning cotton, milling corn, storing what was to be shipped to market, arranging for shipment to metropolitan merchant houses, and importing supplies and consumer goods for local distribution. Jacques and Isaac Rapalje provided mercantile services along the Big Black, while Sinclair Gervais did likewise for his neighbors at the Walnut Hills. Large landowners could afford the equipment necessary to successfully raise cotton for market. Moreover, in the absence of local merchants they developed ties with firms in New Orleans. In setting themselves up in the business of staples agriculture, however, early planters like Gervais and the Rapaljes encouraged their poorer

neighbors merely by extending to them processing and marketing services to increase production for sale. Where there were no plantations small farmers pooled resources and collectively began producing for market.⁷

At some point the flow of goods into and out of a new cotton region attracted the eye of distant merchants who shortly sent representatives to set up stores in the area. George Locker and Benjamin Temple, partners in a Kentucky firm, operated a store at Port Gibson, in Claiborne County, Mississippi. In 1811, believing the new seat of government in Warren County "promised to become a place of some considerable importance," they opened a branch store in Warrenton.⁸ Similarly, Eliphalet Frazier, also of Port Gibson but with ties to the Natchez firm run by Abijah and David Hunt, opened a store on the Big Black River. The Hunt brothers, whose mercantile connections stretched to Philadelphia, New York, and London, traded on the same river.⁹ Edmund Reeves and Thomas Grymes arrived about 1809--their long distance trading connections are not known--and opened a store at the Palmyra community on the Mississippi River among a cluster of small farmers, all of whom raised cotton for market.¹⁰

Warren County's earliest storekeepers were not all outsiders. Local residents reached outward as surely as distant merchants moved in. Hartwell Vick, the son of the planter who established Vicksburg, owned a mercantile, saw-

milling, and planting business at the Walnut Hills, as did his cousins Willis B. Vick and Anthony Durden.¹¹ Anthony Glass, another Walnut Hills planter, arrived in the county during the Spanish period, and worked as a carpenter on Fort Nogales. He managed to obtain a patent for some land and after the Spanish left he remained and took up cotton planting. He also worked as a local producer and shipper of agricultural products, at various times the owner of a mill and gin at a landing on the Big Black River, and on the Mississippi River at Palmyra.¹² His son also combined cotton planting with a dry goods business.¹³ Yet another Glass, Anthony's brother Andrew, engaged in mercantile activities more directly. With Edmund Reeves, who closed the books on his Palmyra business, and John Hyland, a planter's son, Andrew opened the doors of his trading company for business at Warrenton. At the same time he was partners with Matthew Sellers in a second Warrenton store. By 1820 A. Glass and Company was one of the busiest firms in the county, in that year selling over eighteen thousand dollars worth of merchandise, while the firm of Glass and Sellers transacted an additional six thousand dollars in business. The next year this home grown merchant bought out Locker and Company's Warrenton operation, including their three town lots, warehouses, and gin. As testimony to Glass's financial success, he was one of Warren County's first residents to pay a luxury tax.¹⁴

The facility with which planters took up store-keeping, and with which merchants took up cotton planting, suggests the close and easy relationship between the two enterprises. This is not surprising for planting and marketing were obviously interdependent. Farmers needed merchants to market their products and to bring them goods not produced locally. When no merchants were around, as was the case during the pioneer period, they took that task upon themselves. Merchants, of course, depended on farmers to produce marketable crops and to purchase consumer goods. From the time of the earliest settlers through the antebellum period production went hand in hand with distribution. In one sense, an 1830s planter-merchant like Anthony Glass, Jr., was no different from the pioneer farmers of an earlier era who also served as merchants within their small and somewhat isolated neighborhoods.

In another sense, however, Glass was quite different from his predecessors; he separated his planting and trading businesses. His cotton plantation lay three or four miles south of Vicksburg, but he conducted his dry goods business in town. Close connections between planting and trading did not interfere with the increase in specialization that occurred with the development of the local economy, as the volume of trade grew to a point where one had to concentrate on one business or the other, or at least keep the two separate, if either was to succeed. The separation of

collection and distribution activities from production operations within Warren County's local economy thus marked the beginning of the urban process.

With some variations the urban process generally unfolded as follows: Stores, warehouses and mills first appeared on waterways, usually at favorite landings, and at well-travelled country crossroads, initially as part of a local landowner's planting operation, but utilized by the neighborhood at large. Recognizing the advantages of such locations for collecting and distributing goods, merchants with strong connections to distant firms soon arrived and set up their own stores, often leasing or buying an acre or two from the local landowner, perhaps even taking over an original store from a planter who deferred to the merchant's expertise and connections. As central locations for conducting business within rural neighborhoods river landings and crossroads also attracted artisans, blacksmiths and carpenters especially, who set up shops and added to the growing cluster of non-farm households that made up this small but now urban place. At this point the local planter might attempt to capitalize on his situation adjoining a growing village by subdividing part of his acreage into town lots and advertising their sale, or else he might sell a piece of land to speculators and they would try to parcel it out as town lots. In most cases few buyers appeared, and the town remained a village tied closely to adjoining farms and

plantations. But some villages blossomed into towns and cities, offering services to an agricultural economy that extended for miles in all directions. In the process their relationship with the rural neighborhood in the immediate vicinity, that which first gave them life, reversed as farmers began to serve urban demands. All the villages and towns in and around Warren County conformed pretty closely to this general pattern of urban development. Vicksburg was no exception.

Situated at the point where the ridge that follows the Yazoo River from deep within the state converges with the Mississippi, the Walnut Hills had long been a central meeting place. Before the arrival of European settlers the hunting and trading routes of local Native Americans intersected at this spot. Here the Spanish built Fort Nogales and opened the first store in the region. Following the departure of the Spanish the Walnut Hills continued as a local meeting place, although most of the surrounding land was now privately owned.

As early as 1797 a passerby remarked that the Walnut Hills would be "a beautiful situation for a town." A decade later another traveller made the same observation: "These hills are the finest situation for a town I have yet seen on the Mississippi. They are of an eligible height, the ascent easy, the soil luxuriant, and the climate the most temperate on the river."¹⁵ The owner of most of the land at that spot

agreed. Years earlier Elihu Hall Bay, a judge who lived in Charleston, South Carolina, began to acquire Mississippi acreage while working as an agent for the Governor of British West Florida. By the turn of the century he had title to three thousand acres at the Walnut Hills.¹⁶ Bay was the first to actually lay out town lots, although before he could sell any he transferred all his property to his kinsman and fellow Charlestonian Robert Turnbull. Turnbull chose not to proceed with the establishment of a town, instead turning this large tract of forest into a cotton plantation.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the spot where the bluff met the river continued to attract people, and a small urban place appeared anyway. By 1814 the "numerous buildings, dwelling houses, gin-house, negro quarters" on and adjoining the Turnbull plantation looked to a passing river boatman "like a little village."¹⁸ Honore P. Morancy kept a store at the hills. Hartwell Vick, another local merchant, built a warehouse there. The blacksmith shop belonged to E. D. Walcott. James Center operated the saw mill. Then the owner of a cotton plantation adjoining Turnbull's laid off lots for the new town that was to bare his name. Newit Vick managed to sell only one lot before dying, leaving his heirs to complete the plan.¹⁹

Lots in the new town of Vicksburg sold quickly.²⁰ The spread of cotton plantations into the interior of the county, and into the interior of the state after the Choctaw

Indian land cession in 1820, had created an urgent need for a commercial entrepôt on the Mississippi River. The Walnut Hills were the obvious place for a river port, as Vick and others before him had foreseen. The bluff would save a town from the springtime floods that inundated other places. More importantly, that location was the closest accessible point on the river for the inhabitants of newly settled regions to the northeast. Not surprisingly Vicksburg flourished, quickly surpassing in size an older Warrenton, located a mere ten miles down river. But timing was as important as location. Two decades earlier Elihu Bay had envisioned a town. The years between his aborted attempt to realize that vision and Vick's success on the same spot made all the difference. Until the 1820 Choctaw cession and the development of cotton agriculture in the interior of the state the farm households around the Walnut Hills could support only a village, and Warrenton, with its more central location within the most settled regions of the county, was the larger and more important urban place.

On the strength of a large hinterland that reached far beyond the Warren County line, Vicksburg in the space of a decade rose from wilderness to commercial center second in the state only to Natchez.²¹ In the mid-1830s farmers from along the Big Black and beyond, some a hundred miles distant, sent thirty thousand bales of cotton to river boats docked at Vicksburg's wharves, nearly four times the cotton

marketed through Warrenton. Incredibly, the number of bales that found their way to Warrenton's levee actually declined nearly 50 percent between 1812 and 1833, even as the cotton economy around the town boomed.²² As Vicksburg grew, offering more goods and services--and in turn offering a growing market for goods and services--lawyers, merchants, and mechanics moved their shops from Warrenton to Vicksburg, so that farmers increasingly had to take their business to the bustling new town, even if it entailed a longer trip over rough roads. Of course, roads, especially the best ones, now more often than not led to Vicksburg. Eventually a majority of county voters decided to move the courthouse to Vicksburg, thereby stripping Warrenton of its last claim to prominence within the county.²³ By the mid-1840s Vicksburg not only provided access to national and world markets, but had become one in its own right, as R. Y. Rogers discovered. Rogers gave up cotton planting and began to raise corn and vegetables, especially tomatoes, for the Vicksburg market. He also established a profitable dairy business in town.²⁴

The growth of Vicksburg ultimately reoriented trading patterns within the county by channeling lines of communication between the county and the outside world. While the wealthiest planters, particularly those with river frontage, continued to deal directly with commission houses in New Orleans, inland farmers and planters sold their cotton and purchased manufactured goods and supplies through

any one of the many forwarding merchants in town, most of whom worked as agents of such New Orleans firms as Miller and Gooch, and J. B. Byrne and Company. They gave advances in cash or supplies for consignments of cotton, and in this manner replaced wealthy planters and country storekeepers who had previously worked as liaisons between rural communities and distant markets.²⁵ In addition, the lower prices and greater selection of Vicksburg stores undercut the business of village shopkeepers, particularly those close to town.

Figure 7-2 shows the location of country stores in 1820, before Newit Vick's town had materialized. All were located in the north end of the county, three of them at the Walnut Hills. South-end residents took their business to one of the six stores at Warrenton, which at that time was a thriving town with a promising future. The rise of Vicksburg, however, displaced all but the most distant neighborhood stores in the vicinity of the Walnut Hills, while the concurrent decline of Warrenton created opportunities for country storekeepers in the county's southern end (Figure 7-3). The appearance of several peddlers, who carted wares around the county from home bases within the city, stretched Vicksburg's tentacles farther still.²⁶

By 1850 Vicksburg's commercial orbit reached much farther than the above figures suggest, for the county's

country storekeepers conducted a very localized trade. W.S. Hankinson's store at Yokena Plantation, south of Warrenton, provided all the usual services: arranging for the shipment of small amounts of cotton to Vicksburg merchants; lending small amounts of money; acquiring for customers such specialty items as books, sheet music, cigars, glassware, oysters; buying butter, apples, and turkeys from local farmers for resale in Vicksburg; acting in general as a conduit between the surrounding rural neighborhood and the urban market. However, not all the stock Hankinson purchased from local farmers went on to Vicksburg. Much of it, perhaps most of it, ended up in the pantries of his neighbors. The Yokena store, in other words, stood at the center of a small and surprisingly self-contained exchange network, collecting local products for distribution locally. The exact proportion of the business devoted to this trade is not known. The surviving account book is not precise on this point. But it appears to have been considerable, for the majority of his transactions consisted of local produce sold to neighbors.

Warren County's country storekeepers had always engaged in local trade. Years earlier the Rapaljes had provided for their neighbors services similar to those provided by Hankinson. But the Rapaljes had also provided their neighbors with vital connections to distant markets. As Vicksburg merchants started to direct trade between the



Figure 7-2. Country Stores, 1820.

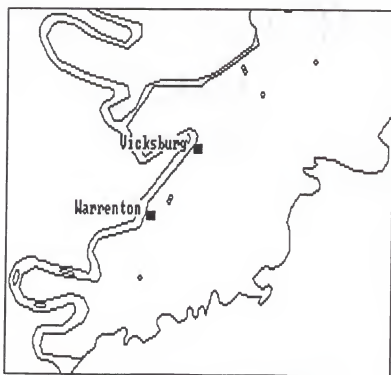


Figure 7-3. Country Stores, 1850.

county and the outside world, leaving the neighborhood trade to storekeepers like Hankinson, they detached external from internal trade networks. This realignment of exchange patterns thus connected rural neighborhoods to Vicksburg but did so without undermining the integrity of each as a distinct place. Only the settlements close to town and along the rail line that ran eastward through the middle of the county had no country storekeepers, indicating that they had lost their local trade to Vicksburg's merchants.²⁷

Vicksburg's tentacles stretched into the interior of Mississippi and Louisiana, bringing the business of distant communities to the town wharf or the merchant houses along Washington Street, then connecting those places through a system of cities to the national and international markets. A culling of place names from several Vicksburg newspapers provides the basis for a sketch of Vicksburg's supra-local business network, presented in Figure 7-4. Each number on the figure refers to the number of mentions each place received in the newspapers, with dots representing single mentions.²⁸ What emerges is the outline of a town system within the west-central region of Mississippi, and spilling into Louisiana and Arkansas. The majority of places mentioned were situated upriver, indicating the influence of the river current on trade networks. Planters shipped their cotton to collection centers downriver. However, no place

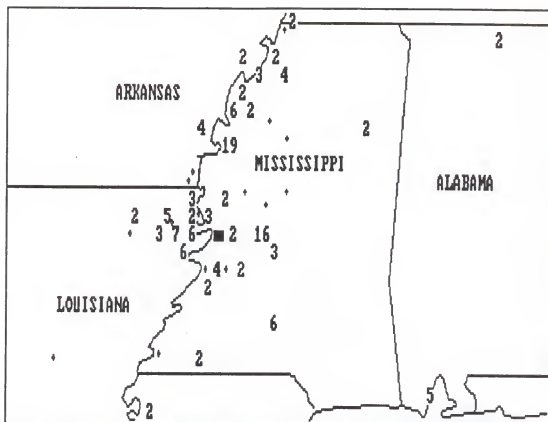


Figure 7-4. Places Mentioned in an Economic Context in the *Vicksburg Whig*, February 29, March 7, June 6, October 18, 1860.

above Memphis received mention. That city sat at the center of its own hinterland, and directed trade past Vicksburg. Likewise, Natchez sat at the center of the region downriver. Very clearly there was no interregional network.²⁹ None of the major river cities between Memphis and New Orleans received more than one or two mentions, with the exception of Greenville, a new town in the largely unsettled delta region north of Vicksburg and that received more mentions than any other place. Greenville and Jackson to the east of Vicksburg probably served as local collection and

distribution points within smaller sub-hinterlands.

Newspapers named New Orleans sixty-two times, more than any other place. New York received the second most mentions with thirty-three, while Cincinnati received thirteen. Thus Vicksburg sat on the downriver side of a hinterland which included two sub-regions around the smaller towns of Greenville and Jackson, and connected its hinterland directly to the major metropolises of New Orleans and New York. Connections to cities of similar size and importance were almost non-existent.³⁰

Notes

1. This figure includes Vicksburg's suburbs, which extended well beyond the corporation boundaries. See: H.C. Clarke, comp. General Directory for the City of Vicksburg (Vicksburg: H.C. Clarke, 1860), 73.

2. The description of traffic on Vicksburg's levee comes from Richard Featherston, a resident of the city. Vick et al. vs Mayor. S. S. Prentiss compared Vicksburg during the 1830s with San Francisco during the gold rush years: Seargent S. Prentiss, A Memoir of S. S. Prentiss 2 vols., William Prentiss, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858) p. 184. In 1835 Harriet Martineau found Vicksburg a "raw-looking, straggling place, on the side of a steep ascent, the steeple of the Courthouse magnificently overlooking a huge expanse of wood and a deep bend of the river." Martineau, Retrospect of Western Travel 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838) p. 17. For a good description of Vicksburg, at the end of the antebellum era, see: Harper's Weekly, 6 (1862), 482. The original courthouse burned down in the 1850s only to be replaced with one even more magnificent. Vicksburg's columned courthouse, completed just before the Civil War, is clearly visible in prints made of the city skyline, as is Thomas E. Robins mansion "The Castle." See, for example, the print on the cover page of the General Directory for the City of Vicksburg (Vicksburg: H. C. Clarke, 1860). The directory also offers a valuable description of the city at that time, although one colored by its booster author the Mayor.

3. Travellers often commented on the absence of towns and cities in the southern countryside. For example, Frederick Law Olmstead on Mississippi towns: "I found that many a high-sounding name (figuring on the same maps in which towns of five thousand inhabitants in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania, are omitted), indicated the locality of merely a grocery or two, a blacksmith shop, and two or three log cabins. I passed through two of these map towns without knowing that I had reached them. . . ." A Journey in the Back Country (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 159-160. Also on Mississippi are the observations of Joseph Holt Ingraham in The Southwest. By a Yankee (New York, 1835), 2:205. For other areas of the South see also the observations of James Stirling, Letters from the Slave States (London, 1857), 177, and of J.W. Dorr in Walter Prichard, ed., "A Tourist's Description of Louisiana in 1860," Louisiana Historical Quarterly 21 (October 1938), 1110-1214.

Historians have offered a variety of explanations for why the South did not develop northern-style cities. The problem lay in: the absence of markets in the cotton economy [Douglass C. North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 52, 63-64]; "the preponderance of agriculture," [Harold D. Woodman, King Cotton and His Retainers: Financing and Marketing the Cotton Crop of the South, 1800-1925 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 194]; a distrust on the part of slaveholders of all things urban [Eugene D. Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South (New York: Vintage Book, 1967), 24]; slavery, which obstructed industrialization [Fred Bateman and Thomas Weiss, A Deplorable Scarcity: the Failure of Industrialization in the Slave Economy (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1981)], and which limited southern ties to a national market [Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women on the Old South (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 74-75]; "the historical timing of the South's urbanization" relative to more advanced regions of the country [Don H. Doyle, New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910 (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 2].

4. The following have made the greatest strides toward reconceptualizing the urban process in the South: Joseph J. Ernst and H. Roy Merrens, "'Camden's turrets pierce the skies!': The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies during the Eighteenth Century," William and Mary Quarterly 30 (October 1973), 549-74; Leonard P. Curry, "Urbanization and

Urbanism in the Old South: A Comparative View," Journal of Southern History 40 (February 1974), 43-60; Lyle W. Dorsett and Arthur H. Schaffer, "Was the Antebellum South Antiurban? A Suggestion," Journal of Southern History 38 (February 1972), 93-100; David R. Goldfield, Cotton Field and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607-1980 (Baton Rouge, 1982), pp. 28-79; Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time, vol. 1, Middlesex County, Virginia 1650-1750 (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1984), pp.204-233.

5. For Warrenton see: Statutes of the Mississippi Territory, p. 98. For Hankinson, also known as Hankinsonville, see: Port Gibson Correspondent, 1821, Jan. 10, 1823, Nov. 11, 1824; Warren County Deed Book B, pp. 235-38, WCC; Gordon Cotton, "The New Town of Hankinson," Vicksburg Sunday Post, Nov. 26, 1972. For Mount Vernon see: Warren County Sectional Indexes, Township 14, Range 3 East, Section 26; Port Gibson Correspondent, Sept. 27, 1828; "A New Map of Mississippi with its Roads and Distances" (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., ca 1852; reprinted Jackson, Mississippi: Mississippi Historical Society, 1974). For Carthage, or Redwood, see Vicksburg Advocate and Register, Apr. 9, 1836. The people who lived in Redwood and their occupations comes from the Study Data. For Bridgeport and Tuscombria see: Vicksburg Advocate and Register, June 30, 1834. For DeSoto see: Vicksburg Weekly Southern Sun, Jan. 24, 1859 and Mar. 14, 1859. For Vicksburg see: Will of Newit Vick, Wills and Bonds, August 1819, WCC; Warren County Deed Book B, p. 1, WCC; John W. Vick, et al. vs. Mayor and Aldermen of Vicksburg (1838), High Court of Errors and Appeals, RG 32, vol. 92, p. 527, MDAH. For Mississippi towns in general see John Hebron Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 177-203.

6. Contemporaries noted the paucity of urban places in the South relative to the North, as historians have since. The characterization of the South as a rural society still rings true, although, as David Goldfield and Darrett B. Rutman have pointed out, such a characterization is only relative. The South had its villages, towns, and cities, too. David Goldfield, Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607-1980 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 28-79 writes of "urbanization without cities." In a similar vein, Rutman emphasizes the village as central to the southern experience. See his unpublished essay "The Village South."

7. Eliphalet Frazier vs. Sinclair D. Gervais, Mar. 1819, Superior Court Record, OCHM. For a discussion of the Rapaljes marketing activities and their connections with their neighbors, see chapter two.

8. Warren County Deed Book A, WCC pp. 75-78, 188-189, 229-230.

9. Eliphalet Frazier vs. Sinclair D. Gervais, Mar. 1819, Superior Court Record, OCHM; "A List of Balances taken from the Books of E. Frazier decd. up to the 6th May, 1817," Elizabeth Frazier Papers, NTC. (The Natchez Trace Collection gives the wrong name to this collection. The papers are those of Eliphalet, not Elizabeth, Frazier.) On the local activities of the Hunt brothers see: William K. Thurston to Abijah Hunt (1804), Israel Loring to John Moore (Jan. 16, 1804), Elijah Smith to [Abijah Hunt?] (Sept., 1805), Hunt (Abijah and David) Papers, MDAH. Although the papers make no mention of a store on the Big Black River, Abijah Hunt owned five hundred acres along both sides of the river: Warren County Deed Book B, pp. 235-238, WCC; Claiborne County Deed Book B, p. 336, Claiborne County Courthouse. Their main store in the region was located in Port Gibson.

10. Dorothy Williams Potter, Passports of Southeastern Pioneers 1770-1823 (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1882), p. 158; John Duncan for use of Edmund Reeves vs. Benjamin Steele, Superior Court Record, Mar. 1819, OCHM; Warren County Deed Book A, pp. 4-5, WCC. Reeves arrived in the U.S., probably from England, in February, 1808, just before he showed up in Warren County. His mercantile connections may well have extended back to his port of entry, which could have been New Orleans or one of the ports in the northeast. The size of his business was too small, however, to suggest direct ties to Europe, despite his recent emigration. Little is known about Thomas Grymes, except that he may have come from Virginia. How and when he linked up with Reeves is not known.

11. Warren County Tax Roll, 1818, 1820, Warren County Records, MDAH; Warren County Deed Book C, pp. 162-63, 203-204, WCC; John W. Vick, et al. v. Mayor (1838), High Court of Errors and Appeals, RG 32, vol. 92, MDAH; Durden, Vick and Wrenn v. John Huffman, (Sept. 1819) Superior Court Record, OCHM.

12. May Wilson McBee, comp. The Natchez Court Records, 1767-1805: Abstracts of Early Records (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), p. 438; Claiborne County Deed Book B, pp. 164-65, Claiborne County Courthouse.

13. Vicksburg Register, Sept. 23, 1831.

14. Warren County Deed Book A, pp. 176-78, Book B, pp. 48-49, WCC; Warren County tax roll, 1820, Warren County Records, MDAH.
15. Francis Baily, Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America, in 1796 & 1797 (London: Baily Brothers, 1856),
147. Christian Schultz, Jr., Travels on an Inlands Voyage Through the States of New-York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, and Through the Territories of Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi and New-Orleans; Performed in the Years 1807 and 1808; Including a Tour of Nearly Six Thousand Miles 2 vols. (Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1968 [reprint of 1810 edition]), 2:127.
16. Warren County Deed Book B, pp. 50-56, WCC. E. H. Bay to Anthony Hutchins, December 17, 1802, Claiborne (J.F.H.) Collection, Book E, Group 4, Microfilm roll 7, MDAH. John Belton O'Neill, Biographical Sketches of the Bench and Bar of South Carolina 2 vols. (Charleston, S.C.: S.G. Courtenay, 1859), 1:53-65.
17. Zadok Cramer reported that Bay laid out town lots on a portion of his plantation. Cramer, The Navigator 8th edition, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966 [1814]), p. 312. In 1804 Turnbull sent his brother John to manage his Walnut Hills plantation. Eliza Gould Memoir Letter, October 17, 1868, Marshall (Maria Chotard and family) Papers, Hill Memorial Library, LSU.
18. Cramer, The Navigator, p. 312.
19. Tax rolls, Warren County, 1818, 1820, Warren County Records, MDAH. Warren County Sectional Indexes for Range 4, Township 16, Section 2, Chancery Clerk's Office, WCC. Vick et al. vs. Mayor, 1838, Court Record, High Court of Errors and Appeals, RG 32, MDAH. Gabriel Burnham vs. E.D. Walcott and Foster Cook, Superior Court Record Book, March 1821, OCHM. Will of Newit Vick, Wills and Bonds 1818-23, pp. 42-44, WCC.
20. In April, 1823, John Lane, the administrator of Newit Vick's estate, advertised lots for sale in "Vicksburgh." Over the next year he sold thirty. Port Gibson Correspondent, April 25, 1823. Warren County Deed Books B and C, WCC. In March, 1826, Lane reported to the Probate Court "a true account of sales of all the lots that have been sold in Vicksburgh." The lots sold numbered sixty-eight. Orphans' Court Minute Book B, pp. 153-154, WCC.
21. Jones, Methodism, 1:348-349; Port Gibson Correspondent, June 12, 1823, and January 15, 1824.

22. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, September 11, 1834. J. H. Ingraham, The South-West By a Yankee 2 vols. (New York: Negro University Press, 1968), pp. 169-70.
23. Howard G. Adkins, "Extinct Mississippi Towns," in Sense of Place: Mississippi, pp. , Peggy W. Prenshaw and Jesse O. McKee, eds. (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1979).
24. Herbert Anthony Kellar, ed. Solon Robinson, Pioneer and Agriculturalist: Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1825-1845, Indiana Historical Collections, vol. 21 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1936), 469.
25. Vicksburg Sentinel, December 30, 1844. See the advertisements of various forwarding agents in the Vicksburg newspapers.
26. Board of Police Minutes 1853-1869, pp. 334, 353, 358, WCC.
27. Ledger, Yokena, Mississippi (1852-1856), in the W.S. Hankinson papers in the as yet uncatalogued Thomas D. Clark papers, Division of Special Collections and Archives, Margaret I. King Library, University of Kentucky. One of Joseph Davis's slaves kept a store a Hurricane plantation, which like Hankinson's facilitated neighborhood exchange. See Janet Sharp Hermann, The Pursuit of a Dream (New York: Oxford, 1981, paperback edition published by Vintage, 1983), 18-19.
28. Vicksburg Whig, February 29, March 7, June 6, October 18, 1860. This method of sketching inter-urban connections is borrowed from Allan Pred, Urban Growth and City-Systems in the United States, 1840-1860 (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 156-164, and who provides a discussion of the possible shortcomings of this method.
29. This corresponds with Allan Pred's observation of an absence of a southern city-system. See Urban Growth and City-Systems, p. 159.
30. Harriet E. Amos, found strong connections between Mobile, Alabama, and New York City. See her book Cotton City: Urban Development in Antebellum Mobile (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985).

CHAPTER 8
A PLACE APART FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE:
THE CITY OF VICKSBURG

The villages and towns in and around Warren County from their earliest existence were tied closely to the countryside. To the extent that they supported a predominantly rural economy they differed from larger cities, North and South, where the urban-rural relation was reversed, where the countryside functioned to support a predominantly urban and manufacturing economy. But the relationship between town and country in Warren County indicated only a stage of development and not some unique urban process peculiar to the Old South. While urban development in the South lagged behind the northeast it nevertheless unfolded in a similar manner. By 1860 Vicksburg's relationship with the surrounding rural area had begun to change, as the town showed signs of leading the local economy while portions of the countryside settled into a more secondary and supportive role.

The urban process inched along in Warren County. Nevertheless, throughout the antebellum period the countryside set the tone for life in the county's urban

areas. People familiar with agriculture populated them, people who had lived on a farm or plantation, perhaps still owned one, or who had close kin who lived in the countryside. In particular, cotton planters dominated urban society. They founded five towns and villages and kept them alive with their business. They built homes in them, and brought urban residents into their patriarchal webs. They imported their way of life to town, too. Warren County's most popular duelling grounds were located at Vicksburg, although on the Louisiana side of the river to avoid legal troubles. But planters were not the only people who took the country to town. Slaves drove wagons of cotton down streets and lanes to the gin and wharf. They usually stayed long enough to visit the store and purchase some tobacco or a piece of fancy cloth. Some lingered long enough to get drunk. All the elements of rural society in between the masters and the slaves brought to town their business and their way of life.

The strong influence of the countryside on urban life, however, did not prevent the larger towns and cities from developing into worlds apart. While still young and quite small, Vicksburg became noticeably distinct from the surrounding plantation districts. In particular, its people were different. They came from a greater variety of places, worked at a greater variety of occupations. They created a heterogeneous and fluid society that contrasted sharply with

rural neighborhoods. Strong ties of kinship and patriarchy so vital in the plantation districts were practically absent in the city, creating problems of social control. As in urban places throughout antebellum America the formation of voluntary associations helped to alleviate problems of order. The influence of the countryside continued, yet town folk still developed their own ideas of politics, of making money, of how one ought to live.

The ongoing development of Vicksburg society forced its citizens to readjust their ways of life. Sometimes they made those adjustments reluctantly. To people imbued with the values of rural life only to end up living in a village that had grown to a city of eight thousand people, Vicksburg could seem orderless, chaotic.¹ Life in the countryside appeared permanent, even if it in fact was not, but by comparison life in town sometimes seemed to race out of control, even if in fact there was always an order to urban society. Certainly, Vicksburg was different. In particular, next to the rural neighborhood its society was more dynamic, more complex, its population more heterogeneous in terms of where people came from and what they did once they got there. Town residents had trouble comprehending their growing urban environment. On more than one occasion they tried with violence to enforce their vision of social order. In the end, however, they reformed their vision, not their society, mentally adjusting themselves to their urban

surroundings and letting go of the countryside, if only a little bit.

By 1860 Vicksburg had become a remarkably cosmopolitan town. Persons of foreign birth constituted a quarter of the total free population. By comparison, immigrants accounted for only six percent of the population living outside the city limits. Although the majority, over eighty percent, came from Ireland, England or Germany, the city's foreign-born population represented over seventeen countries in Europe and the Americas. Signs that hung over the shops along Washington Street reflected the ethnic mix of Vicksburg's population: J.F. Baum fruit stand, Bazsinsky and Simmons dry goods and clothing, Botto and Spengler coffee house, Antonio Genella general variety store, Francis Hernandez Havana cigars, Henry Volker shoemaker, Patrick Burns blacksmith, A. J. Carnahan merchant tailor.² Houses of worship scattered around town reflected the variety of cultural and ethnic groups too. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists had churches in town as they did in several rural neighborhoods. But only Vicksburg had a Roman Catholic church and a synagogue.³

Vicksburg's ethnically mixed residents earned their living in a greater variety of ways than did the county's rural inhabitants. In 1860 the census reported 193 different occupations among urban working people, two and a half times the number of occupations among rural folk. Of course the

census enumerator frequently gave different names to what amounted to the same job, but the point stands nonetheless, especially considering that at the very least 62 percent of free workers living outside Vicksburg shared the same occupation: farming.⁴ In contrast, the majority of urban workers can be distinguished according to several occupational categories.

Table 8-1 breaks Vicksburg's free working population for the years 1850 and 1860 into six categories. It reflects some changes in the local economy during the last decade before the Civil War. Since the 1830s the city had had a strong contingent of skilled artisans and mechanics. Early fears of competition from manufacturers upriver in the Ohio Valley had not materialized owing to the spread of Vicksburg's hinterland which eventually provided a sufficient market for their wares. By the end of the

Table 8-1
Percentage of All Employed Free Persons in Six
Occupation Classifications, 1850 and 1860

Occupation	1850	1860
Professional	5	6
Merchant-Service	17	18
Clerical	16	20
Skilled	25	34
Semi-Skilled	4	5
Unskilled	34	17
n	808	1076

Sources: U. S. Census, Population Schedules, Warren County 1850 and 1860. For a listing of the occupations assigned to each classification, see Appendix F.

antebellum era they were gaining in numbers.⁵ However, over the same period opportunities diminished for unskilled workers, most of whom supplied the city with menial labor--ditch digging, levee building, road work. With the city's and the surrounding area's surge of growth over by the mid-1840s they began to leave, perhaps for new towns in Texas or California. Similarly, business for local shopkeepers and proprietors remained steady, but the earlier years of rapid growth were clearly over.

Workers born in the United States dominated the professional and clerical occupations, while foreigners held more than their representative share of the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. Seventy-two percent of all free unskilled laborers in 1860 were not native to the United States. Immigrants also accounted for a disproportionate number of merchant-service workers. Between 1850 and 1860 the representation of foreigners in the unskilled and skilled jobs increased relative to their proportion in the total group of employed free males. Their relative share in all other categories decreased. The pattern for native-born Americans was exactly opposite, as they accounted for an increasing percentage of the professional, merchant-service, clerical, and semi-skilled occupations. When job categories are ranked according to average wealth-holding per worker, the two at the bottom--

skilled and unskilled--are the ones that became increasingly filled with foreigners.

Immigrant workers within occupational groups may be divided further by their place of origin (Table 8-2). Irish predominated among unskilled laborers, providing much of the back-breaking menial labor around town and serving as a pool from which local planters could draw as they needed. For example, during the spring of 1860, his slaves presumably occupied with planting cotton, Aleck Gwin hired three or four hundred Irishmen to construct a levee around his riverfront plantation at Brunswick Landing.⁶ In 1850 Irish accounted for 44 percent of all foreign-born workers in the city, but they accounted for 64 percent of those without a skill, and their representation in that category increased

Table 8-2
Occupation by Place of Birth

Occupation	Place of Birth as a Percentage of All Foreign-Born					
	England or Scotland		Ireland		Germany	
	1850	1860	1850	1860	1850	1860
Professional	20	20	20	0	20	20
Merchant-Service	7	1	18	28	38	32
Clerical	13	10	43	16	27	49
Skilled	12	24	42	21	36	34
Semi-Skilled	20	24	40	14	20	38
Unskilled	7	4	64	74	17	11
All Occupations	10	13	44	36	27	29
Total Number	29	53	125	147	77	121

Source: U. S. Census, Population Schedules, Warren County 1850 and 1860.

over the decade. German immigrants were more likely to arrive with a skill, and eventually to open their own shops. They formed the heart of the local storekeeper and business community. When they did not work for themselves they could be found keeping the books or managing stores owned by others. A minority worked at menial tasks, like George Mindrop, a red-headed boy recently arrived from Baden-Baden. J. M. Gibson found him digging in a ditch along side slaves on Cherry Street.⁷ However, in contrast to the Irish, the Germans largely avoided such work. Indeed, by 1860 they were over represented in every category except unskilled. Max Kuner's experiences were perhaps more typical than were young Mindrop's. Born in Bavaria, on Lake Constance across from Switzerland, Kuner arrived in New Orleans at the age of twenty-three. Though he spoke no English he found work upriver repairing watches for a Vicksburg jeweller. Within seven years he owned the store. By 1860, thirteen years after his arrival in Mississippi, his business had \$56,000 on the books, and he owned a \$5000 home on Grove Street.⁸ English and Scottish immigrants took up the same occupations as native laborers, spreading themselves throughout several categories but generally avoiding unskilled and merchant-service jobs, the same type of work least attractive to the American-born.

For every four white laborers in Vicksburg there were three slaves. What kind of work they did can only be surmised, however, because the census did not record slave occupations. Nevertheless, their employment presumably was connected to their owners' business. That few free skilled laborers--23 percent in 1850 and 12 percent in 1860--owned or hired slave assistants suggests that few slaves worked in the small shops of local artisans, especially by the end of the decade. The largest slaveholding in Vicksburg--28 men, 2 women, 10 children--worked in manufacturing at Abraham Reading's foundry. But the majority of Vicksburg slaves served in the homes and offices of professionals, merchants, and storekeepers, for the whites most able to afford them.⁹ The absence in the historical record of complaints from local artisans about competition from slaves further indicates that most of the city's unfree population worked as domestic servants.¹⁰ In addition to those who lived and worked in town, slaves from the countryside crowded the streets along the riverfront during late autumn and winter, unloading bales of cotton from wagons, reloading them with supplies. Typically unsupervised, they stayed in town as long as a week, spending what cash they had and frequently returning drunk to their master.¹¹

Slaves were not the only people to venture to town during the winter. Its streets empty and quiet during the hot summers, particularly when yellow fever threatened,

Vicksburg filled with strangers in December and January. Boatmen, gamblers, entertainers, businessmen, people looking for work, drifters--if their travels took them south at all they arranged to go when the weather up north turned cold.¹² In addition to this seasonal flow of population there were always people for whom river towns like Vicksburg were merely way stations along extended journeys. Indeed, the majority of Vicksburg's inhabitants simply passed through. Vicksburg was over forty years old by the start of the Civil War, but at that moment, incredibly, only one in four residents could say they had lived there for even a decade. The town was full of newcomers. For every stranger who wandered up the hill from the levee, unpacked a carpet bag at a hotel or rented a room in a boarding house someone else loaded a wagon or placed a trunk on a river boat and moved on. By 1860 only thirty-nine percent of Vicksburg's 1850 household heads remained. The typical migrant was a man in his twenties who found work as an unskilled laborer. Usually foreign-born, or at least foreign to Mississippi, bound for Texas maybe, or California, they settled in Vicksburg for a couple of years, worked, saved some money, sometimes married, then moved on.¹³

Not all of the people who passed through Vicksburg were aimless wanderers. Of course some did simply drift. Others, however, perhaps even the majority, moved with purpose. Unskilled workers often experienced rapid upward mobility.

Half of those present in 1850 and 1860 had moved into new types of work by the later date, a third of them into retailing and shopkeeping businesses. A large minority of clerical workers also experienced some mobility, both upward into mercantile and service occupations and downward into unskilled jobs. Workers in other categories, however, tended to remain where they were. Thus the most geographically mobile people were also the most occupationally mobile, patterns that suggest how the fluidity of urban society proved advantageous to poor white workers and ultimately may have given many of them a stake in southern society.¹⁴

Propertyless and unskilled migrants from the North, from older plantation districts, from Europe landed in cities like Vicksburg, found work and a steady income that enabled them to accumulate savings, which they applied toward the purchase of a plot in the countryside. For the upwardly mobile who started without the advantage of an inheritance the goal of settling on a farm or plantation was reachable. Towns and cities provided them with work and an income. Admittedly, evidence on this point remains impressionistic. On average people with little money or property flowed into Vicksburg while people with some accumulated savings moved out. In the countryside the trend was reversed; incoming migrants had considerably more property than out-migrants. In the absence of a full study of migration these patterns of wealthholding and population

flow nevertheless hint that Michael Brady's experience may have been shared by others. Born in Ireland, the thirty-year-old Brady migrated to Vicksburg where in 1850 he worked as a clerk. He owned no slaves and no real estate. Before the end of the decade he had accumulated enough money to purchase a slave and a piece of land in the Warren County countryside valued at \$1000.¹⁵

Michael Brady's experience indicates that Vicksburg residents remained closely tied to the countryside, as they had since the town's founding. However, Brady was exceptional in that he remained in Warren County. Most of the people who left Vicksburg left the area entirely, presumably for places less settled, where farmland could be had for a cheaper price. In stark contrast to Brady, most of the city folk who did eventually settle in the immediately surrounding countryside tended to be wealthy members of the town establishment, people like Abraham Reading, owner of the town foundry, lawyer William C. Smedes, a former partner with Seargent S. Prentiss, and Austin Mattingly, a prosperous miller. All started in Vicksburg business and eventually purchased plantations locally, thereby strengthening urban-rural ties.¹⁶ In contrast to these quite visible success stories, however, were the masses who flowed in and out of Vicksburg. As purposeful as these migrants may in fact have been, to the town's more permanent residents they were rootless, aimless transients, appearing out of

nowhere, staying but a brief while, then leaving for who-knows-where without giving anyone a chance to get to know them.

Vicksburg had been built by local people with purposes clear enough for any to see: to provide marketing services for the surrounding countryside, and to profit by so doing. The town never lost its original purpose, although in time it also developed into the county's social and political center. Locals built it to serve local ends. For this reason they saw outsiders as potentially threatening, even dangerous, simply for being outsiders with no apparent desire to join with the local population, but also because there were so many of them. Controlling the masses of newcomers, however, was a problem. Urban society, contrary to the plantation districts, was not structured by strong ties of kinship and friendship. Vicksburg elites, most of whom had once held sway in the countryside and perhaps still did, had difficulty extending their influence over the strangers who wandered through their town.

In September 1831 a notice appeared in the local newspaper addressed "to the citizens of Vicksburg, particularly the young men." The author called for the formation of a militia company, the first in the county since Mississippi's territorial period. "There is a prospect of a great many visitors the coming winter," the notice warned, "and in all probability a number of which will need

regulating, and such a company may be found beneficial to the protection and harmony of out Town." In a separate item the newspaper's editor also called for a patrol to enforce the law, and at the same time warned readers of the rising frequency of thefts in Vicksburg. Amazingly, the bodies left in the wake of Nat Turner's bloody uprising were barely two months in the Virginia ground, yet the cry for a militia in Warren County first came from town, not from the surrounding plantation district. More frightening than the county's enslaved blacks, apparently, though they outnumbered whites by one thousand, were the numerous strangers who would wander into Vicksburg that winter. That fear never dissipated. In 1860 three militia companies patrolled city streets, regulating in particular "all itinerants and persons being in this community without any visible means of support, and who are unknown in this community."¹⁷

Vicksburg's celebrated anti-gambling riots soon confirmed the dangers posed by the town's temporary citizenry. The affair began when a professional gambler disrupted a Fourth of July picnic. It ended with a shoot out and a mass hanging. In all six people died. The card players and faro dealers, at least those who knew what was good for them and most of them did, heeded the warnings of the hastily organized Anti-Gambling Society to flee the town or face severe consequences.¹⁸

That the people of Vicksburg would come to blows with the gamblers who plied the boats and wharves of the Mississippi River is not surprising. The very nature of their profession kept gamblers rootless and disrespectful of local authority. "Unconnected with society by any of its ordinary ties, and intent only on the gratification of their avarice," wrote the local editor, they were the most threatening species of migrant to wander into Vicksburg, all the more so because their disease was so contagious: "Every species of transgression followed in their train. They supported a large number of tippling houses to which they would decoy the youthful and unsuspecting, and after stripping them of their possession, send them forth into the world the ready and desperate instruments of vice."¹⁹

The people of Vicksburg lashed out at more than the gamblers, however, using the opportunity to generally purge their city of all kinds of undesirable sorts. The militia took the lead, suspending the law for twenty days while they tarred and feathered suspected thieves. "If a man says aught against the Company proceedings he is either whipped or hung," observed one townsman whose misgivings about the handling of the crisis were relieved by his concern for the "many stragglers about."²⁰

The leaders of Vicksburg attacked the gamblers in part because they were a particularly visible target collected as they were in their own section of town. Very quickly after

its founding Vicksburg divided into three neighborhoods. A business district developed along the waterfront and back a few blocks toward the courthouse. Beyond the public square along the hills were the constantly expanding residential sections. A third neighborhood, the favorite haunt of Vicksburg's gamblers, boatmen and stragglers, appeared in the swamp land north of the business district. This section of town, known as the Kangaroo, with its soggy streets and crude shanties, squatted in stark contrast to the fine brick homes in the neighborhood atop the bluff. Its card dealers, whores, and bar room brawlers were notorious throughout the lower Mississippi. Only Natchez Under-the-Hill was more famous. The Kangaroo was a constant source of embarrassment and fear for Vicksburg's established residents.

A year and a half before the riots the Kangaroo burned to the ground. In all likelihood a drunken rowdy simply kicked over a lantern. But if concerned local residents were not so zealous as to actually set the fire themselves, they applauded it nonetheless. A hundred or so gathered to mourn the death, as one local wit put it, of their "friend," the "celebrated KANGAROO." "Its ashy remains were interred upon the spot which its deeds have immortalized, and a splendid oblation of sundry time-honored and antiquated rats was offered up as a propitiation, for whatsoever misdeeds it might have committed in the flesh." Pushing his tongue further into his cheek the author of the obituary continued:

"It is with regret that I state, that some of the bystanders were so injudicious and unseemly withal, as to make the whole a subject of jeering and mockery; but not one of them will close his mortal career with so much of light and lustre as did my lamented friend." As it turned out the celebration of the Kangaroo's demise was premature. However, the excitement generated by the fire illustrated the antipathy elicited from the rest of the town folk by that neighborhood's raucous inhabitants.²¹ Residents found other targets for those same feelings. The theater burned down more than once, to the delight of Mr. Patterson, who "thought morality would be benefitted by the burning." Others apparently shared his views.²²

Vicksburgers did not reserve their fear of outsiders for such shady characters as gamblers and entertainers. Every fall flatboats loaded with wares descended the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Crowding the wharves of the lower towns, their captains dispensed goods, and eventually the boats themselves, to local buyers before returning in the spring to their homes up north. These boatmen, who were by and large businessmen not unlike Vicksburg's shopkeepers, became objects of the town's xenophobia.

While local storekeepers depended on the wholesale supplies of the boatmen to keep their shelves stocked, they naturally resented competition from floating retailers. "Nearly every produce house has been closed," wrote one

disgruntled Vicksburger to the town council, "and that business usurped by a few strangers, who, I am told, lie here all winter, trade in all things, and to a large amount, without paying one cent tax, either to the State or corporation."²³ The writer worried about more than the competition the flatboaters presented to local merchants, however. In language that could have been applied to the gamblers, he feared for the moral influence the visitors would have on the city. Their liquor "seduces the poor, and particularly our slaves to buy, and the constitution is injured by its drink, whilst the morals are corrupted."²⁴ Furthermore, these strangers came "from a country whose people entertain deep rooted prejudices against our institutions, who have for us a secret hatred."²⁵ The appearance in the North of abolitionism did nothing to ease tensions between the town folk and the boatmen.

Riots nearly erupted in Vicksburg once again. In an attempt to chase away some of the several hundred flatboats docked at the public landing the city government began to charge a daily wharf fee. Their efforts had no effect, so officials kept raising the wharfage rate. When it reached fifty dollars a day per boat, the flatboatmen suddenly rebelled. A mob of perhaps a thousand angry people armed with guns, clubs and at least one cannon crowded the waterfront opposite the local militia which took up positions behind a wall of cotton bales. Lines were thus

drawn for a very bloody fight. Perhaps those prospects brought all parties to their senses. Before a shot was fired all laid down their arms and agreed to let the court settle the dispute.²⁶

At bottom of the gambling riots, the flatboat war, and possibly the fires that erupted in certain sections of town, lay a nagging sense among Vicksburg residents that they were losing control of their city to strangers. Of course the threat posed by drunken knife-and-gun-wielding gamblers was to an extent quite real, as was abolitionism. More alarming than either, however, was the helplessness of town leaders to do anything about them. Vicksburg's residents found themselves torn between on one hand their desire for the river trade and on the other hand their fear that the swarms of people who came with that trade would eventually seize the town. Thus, in their minds all strangers were gamblers, abolitionists, drunkards, or trouble-makers out to destroy their "respectable" society.

As happened in towns and cities throughout antebellum America, Vicksburg's household heads responded to rapid population growth and high rate of mobility, and to their sense of social disorder created by demographic patterns, by forming voluntary associations. In 1831 a group of young men started Vicksburg's first voluntary militia. That same year the Temperance Association met for the first time. The next year the Clerks' Debating Society and the Vicksburg and

Warren County Colonization Society started meeting. Succeeding years saw the organization of the Carpenters' Society, the Anti-Duelling Society, the Mechanics' Mutual Benefit Society, the Sons of Temperance, the Hibernian Society, at least two more militia companies, half a dozen chapters of Masons, Odd Fellows, Sons of Malta, the Ladies Benevolent Association, the Chess Club, several volunteer fire companies, the Agricultural and Mechanical Association, and the exclusive Magnolia Club.²⁷

Voluntary associations performed two almost contradictory functions that managed to give some much needed structure to Vicksburg's dynamic society. First they provided a means of integrating newcomers into the town establishment, thereby easing the worries caused by the large transient population. Prior to the formation of voluntary associations the best claims to membership among the town establishment rested on a long standing position within the local community. Newcomers without some connection to a local resident who could introduce them and vouch for their character were thus shut out. Voluntary associations gave newcomers an easier way to become a part of established society; they could join a club, a process that was particularly easy for new arrivals who had joined a chapter of a national organization elsewhere, Odd Fellows and Masons for example.

Second, associations nevertheless maintained the division between the established citizenry and newcomers by sharply contrasting both groups. Voluntary societies, their leaders especially, in effect defined by example what it meant to be a part of the established citizenry: hard working, responsible, prosperous. Older and wealthier men of long time residency in the community, most of them professionals, storekeepers, or artisans who owned their shops, filled the leadership posts of Vicksburg's voluntary associations. Typically, they owned two and a half times as much real estate and five times as many slaves as the average household head, sufficient property to place them among the wealthiest ten percent of the city's household heads. They were native-born, with most coming from southern states but not in numbers disproportionate to the representation of southerners among the total population. Not only did officers share similar backgrounds and lifestyles, they were so well connected to each other that they must have presented a solid front, a consensus image of town leadership. Several served on the boards of more than one club at a time and could have introduced each of the remaining officers to half the people in the group.²⁸

Of course, the founders of some organizations set out to do more than simply portray an image. The militias, for example, went about their business with little subtlety or tact. However, they were effective at easing social tension

only in part by providing overt social control. Like the more benign organizations such as the Chess Club, they also helped relieve the sense of disorder by simply bringing residents together, by defining one's position within the community, and by giving the town a more visible social structure.

Despite the militias the gamblers returned, flatboats continued to crowd the wharf, masses of strangers continued to come and go. Gun clubs did not clean up the town. Temperance societies did not stop the liquor from flowing. A glance at a single newspaper issue from December, 1860, conveys a picture of a society as raucous as ever: At Molly Bunch's "house of ill-fame" several boatmen got into a fight. One was killed. A city constable tried to break up the struggle and was shot at but not hurt. Another fight broke out, this time at Coppersmith's "whiskey mill" on Levee Street. The same day a local magistrate dismissed charges on two drunks found asleep on a sidewalk, but did order the offenders to leave town. And authorities incarcerated another drunk, a woman, also found asleep on a sidewalk. Meanwhile, concerned citizens organized another police society. Yet, this new society did little more than elect officers and debate rules concerning purpose and membership.²⁹ Little had changed over the preceding thirty years except in the perception of the problem posed by drunken and troublesome strangers. There was a noticeable

waning of the sense of urgency. Mobs no longer purged the city of undesireables perhaps because voluntary societies gave to their members, to the permanent residents as a whole, a sense of being in control. Thus they were able live with a society that was really no more or less "disorderly," that is prone to drunkenness and brawling, than it had been in the days of the anti-gambling riots.

The people of Vicksburg responded to the dislocations caused by rapid urbanization and high population turnover by creating what historian Don Doyle calls the "voluntary community" to strengthen ties among established residents, to mitigate tensions with newcomers, and to organize a leadership that could give some direction to local development. In so doing they repeated a common pattern.³⁰ In two important ways, however, the voluntary societies of this southern town deviated from those of northern towns that historians have taken as the norm. First, men completely dominated Vicksburg's voluntary societies. Women were absent even from the reform societies that they were so actively involved in elsewhere, most specifically, temperance organizations and orphan asylums.³¹ The task of dispensing "noble charities" fell entirely to the Masons, Odd Fellows, and mechanics organizations until 1850 when several Vicksburg women organized the Ladies Benevolent Association, a club that did not last the decade.³²

Second, local churches did not actively participate in the town's reform associations.³³ On occasion a preacher would make special efforts to reach the transient population. The pastor of the Presbyterian church, for example, spent some Sunday afternoons preaching before the flatboatmen at the landing, although he may have been exceptional. For not all ministers tried so hard to tame the town's more rough-and-tumble elements. In his history of Presbyterians in Mississippi C. W. Grafton told of how several drunken rowdies interrupted the Reverend George Moore of Vicksburg one Sunday as he delivered his sermon to his congregation. The trouble-makers demanded an end to "such silly doings as preaching." According to Grafton, Moore removed his jacket, stepped from his pulpit and marched down the aisle, and like a bar room bouncer slammed his adversaries with several good punches and threw them out the door. The pastor then "went calmly back to the pulpit and put on his coat and began again to preach the glad gospel." ³⁴ No doubt Grafton exaggerated to tell a good story. Nevertheless, there were no bible or tract societies organized, no revivals like those that occurred in Rochester, New York, that would bring the masses of outsiders into Vicksburg congregations.³⁵ On the whole evangelical attitudes did not have the influence on Vicksburg's associations they had elsewhere, as was apparent in the style of the town's reformers. Instead of appealing

to individual conscience, they threatened community wrath. A local newspaper reflected this attitude in a warning to all "loafers, rowdies and gamblers. If you cannot get high wages work for low ones; if you cannot get low ones work for your victuals and clothes. It is much more respectable than lounging about and doing nothing." The writer did not, however, hold up the positive rewards of hard work and a job well done. He pointed out the negative rewards for idlers: "There is a feeling rapidly gaining strength in this community which says in tones not to be mistaken or misunderstood, that idleness and profligacy must be put down. It rests with you to choose whether you will do it yourselves or have the citizens do it for you."³⁶ Such threats were real, backed up by several enthusiastic militias charged with the responsibility of removing "all itinerants and persons being in this community without any visible means of support, and who are unknown in this community."³⁷

The explanation for the peculiar character of Vicksburg's voluntary associations lies in the town's close association with the countryside, and in the fact that the town's founders and early leaders were either former planters or else were closely associated with rural slaveholders. In seeking to bring some order to a dynamic urban environment Vicksburg's leaders tried to recreate the structure they had known in the countryside. They built

organizations that worked like extended patriarchal families, marshalling the power of a few on behalf of the many who pledged loyalty in return. Not surprisingly they preferred the authoritative style of the militias and the Anti-Gambling Society to the softer, more persuasive approach of the temperance societies, which they left to townsmen born outside the South.³⁸

Leaders perceived the town as a close-knit community, not as a mass of individuals, an image they reflected through the weaving and overlapping of their societies. Indeed, the associational web constructed by the officers of the town's voluntary societies was more interconnected than the kin-networks of rural neighborhoods. The odds that any two officers were linked directly or by one intermediary were forty percent, double the chances of kinship connecting two household heads in the most densely connected rural neighborhoods.³⁹ Of course leadership in Vicksburg depended not on kinship and the control of large estates, but on reputation, which voluntary societies upheld by their power exclusion, and by frequent public display. Edward Welles, a Yankee newcomer, described the funeral of "an old resident," in which the Volunteer Southern Military Company, the Vicksburg Military Association, the Masons, and a band all joined the procession. "Secret societies and public associations," he observed, "are more generally cultivated here than at the North. The public displays of the Masonic

Lodges in this town are more frequent, more gorgeous in their arrangements and more universally appreciated than in Northern towns."⁴⁰ More demonstrative of their power, but occurring less frequently, were the public displays of authority during moments of crisis. When called to act Vicksburg's rulers did so quickly and decisively, as during the gambling riots, in the manner of any planter patriarch defending his clan.

A rural style could not last long in an urban place, however. By the late 1840s and through the next decade the character of Vicksburg's associations had begun to change. New types of societies appeared. Edward Welles, who was so taken with the Masons and militias, complained about the lack of a scientific or literary association, but his comments came almost too late.⁴¹ Within a few years a chapter of the State Historical Society, a Chess Club and Reading Room, and for the more scientific minded the Agricultural and Mechanical Association were meeting regularly, improving the city not by forcefully removing unwanted sorts but by bringing to it an air of gentility.⁴² Vicksburg and its citizens were coming of age as a city apart from the countryside.

The development of an urban sensibility was particularly evident during the debate over dueling and in the efforts of several Vicksburg leaders to cease such affairs once and for all. The duel is nearly synonymous with

the Old South. Warren County certainly had its share, usually stemming from disputes between rival planter patriarchs. But the duel evolved into an accepted means by which gentlemen, including urban elites, could settle their disputes. Indeed, these affairs of honor became more important in the city among non-planters because their authority rested so much on prestige and public display rather than on real power held through control of family property. Seargent S. Prentiss, Vicksburg's famous Whig lawyer and orator, fought more than one duel. For a time The Black Knight, Alexander K. McClung, perhaps the South's most feared duelist, made his home in Vicksburg. The city's editors were notorious. Between 1841 and 1860 four of them died in gun fights. Another killed a man, received a wound in another duel from which he recovered only to meet his end in yet another conflict, this time in Texas. Vicksburg more than the surrounding countryside served as the main arena for duels, as urban residents adapted the planters' culture to a dynamic urban environment.⁴³

In the years following the gambling riots there emerged in some quarters of the city a sense that the lynchings and duels were wrong. Perhaps they were even immoral, or at least not proper behavior for civilized people, gentlemen especially. Vicksburg took a beating in the national press following the hanging and banishment of the gamblers. The city acquired a national reputation that took years to live

down, much to the dismay of its boosters. The frequency with which some residents shot at one another did not help the city's image. For example, in 1837 an alleged abolitionist named Grace received twenty or thirty lashes for encouraging slaves to escape by writing false passes for them. The northern press voiced shock and dismay at yet another lynching in Vicksburg. They expressed particular outrage that the whipping had taken place within earshot of the victim's wife and children. Clearly nothing had changed since the gamblers riot. In the town's defence the editor of the Advocate and Register pointed out that critics had exaggerated the event. Grace had not been "'whipped within hearing of the shrieks and lamentations of his wife and children,'" as northern papers reported. "It was at a considerable distance, we cannot state it exactly, but entirely out of hearing of his house."⁴⁴ That town residents cared at all about the opinions of outsiders, especially northerners, attests to the continually developing position of Vicksburg within a national urban system, which was effectively pulling the city away from the countryside, away from the South. The town's national stature began to matter to local boosters, who sounded defensive tones when reminded of its reputation for violence. Wrote a local editor, "there is not now another place of the size in the United States where there is generally less crime or so resolute and determined hostility

to lynching is manifested as in Vicksburg."⁴⁵ Perhaps. In any case, northerners were sometimes relieved to find that the town did not live up to its "unenviable reputation," and that in Vicksburg "it is by no means necessary to peel your apples with a Bowie Knife."⁴⁶

The event that actually precipitated the organization of the Anti-Dueling Society was the murder of James Hagan, an editor at the Democratic Vicksburg Sentinel. Ever the irascible old man, Hagan had let his vituperative pen get him into dangerous scrapes before but had always managed to survive. In this instance he turned his poison on a Whiggish judge and ruffled the feathers of the juror's son. The young man came from Jackson armed and ready to fight. He met Hagan on the street around the corner from the editor's office, and there they quarrelled and wrestled to the ground before the young man fired his pistol, sending a ball between Hagan's shoulders, up through his neck, and into his brain.⁴⁷

Horried by this bloody affair, and fearful that it would resurrect the city's reputation for violence, a group of men led by John Bodley pledged to eradicate Vicksburg streets of all gun battles. Nine years earlier Bodley's kinsman had sought to clean up the town when he helped to blast the gamblers out of a coffee shop in the Kangaroo District. He died trying. How times had changed since then. The solution had become the problem. No less than card-

sharking and drunkenness, dueling and violence in general no matter who its perpetrators, and regardless of motives, was "subversive of the peace and happiness of society." Members of the new society resolved to withdraw their business from newspapers that published slanderous remarks, or challenges and responses. They promised to "sustain any person, by all means in our power, who will refuse to challenge, or to accept a challenge." They would press the state legislature to forbid public officials from fighting, and urge officers of the law in Louisiana, where Vicksburg's dueling grounds were located, promptly to arrest "all parties engaged or about to engage in such practices."⁴⁸

Bodley's resolutions did not go unopposed. Country elites led by Joseph and Jefferson Davis argued for moderation. Hagan had not died in a duel, they pointed out, but in a crude and unnecessary brawl, a "puppy fight." Efforts to stop such violence were to be encouraged, but they should not impinge upon the right of gentlemen to settle their affairs honorably. Borrowing an argument from pro-slavery theorists, Jefferson Davis insisted that dueling "can only be suppressed by the progress of intelligence, morality and good breeding." For this reason an effort should be made to resolve only those conflicts that arise "unnecessarily."

Jefferson's older brother Joseph was more to the point. Directing his comments to Judge Bodley he argued that "when

men had become so just and enlightened as to do away with the necessity for personal accountability, that his Honor would be required no longer to sit upon the bench." "Let us correct the abuses," he urged, "but, sir, let us, for all gross insults not properly atoned for, make it imperative upon the agressed to stand on equal terms and fight; make it so, sir, that he must fight, atone, or leave the country." For the Davises and their followers the duel was a privilege, indeed a mark, of their standing in society. But urban elites were shedding the notions of honor that still guided rural folk. Bodley and his followers no longer distinguished between crude and genteel violence. "The duel was against the laws of God and man," the staunch anti-duelers cried, to which Seargent Prentiss responded with the suggestion that they re-read the scriptures and note the "splendid duel" between David and Goliath. In the end Bodley carried the day, shutting the Davis's and their followers out of the association leadership.⁴⁹

That Jefferson and Joseph Davis would not oppose dueling in instances when a gentleman's honor had to be offended is not at all surprising. And one would expect they would be joined by the likes of Seargent S. Prentiss, a practiced duelist, and by Colonel Thomas E. Robins, a son-in-law to Joe Davis and owner of the "Castle," perhaps Vicksburg's most renowned mansion. Such men were gentlemen of the highest standing. What is surprising, however, is how

much they had in common with the self-styled "whole-hog anti-fighting men." The backgrounds of seven in the group that opposed dueling are known. All were southern born. They were as wealthy as their opposition, owning on average enough real estate to place them among the top four percent of the county's household heads. At least two were planters, including Henry W. Vick, nephew of Vicksburg's founder, owner of a large plantation on Deer Creek in the Yazoo Delta, developer of Vick's Hundred Seed, one of the South most popular strains of cotton. Yet these gentlemen stood opposed to the duel, the most famous mark of their breed.

The two groups differed, however, in the size of their slaveholdings, in their place of residence, and along party lines. Only three of the "whole-hog" anti-fighters owned more than seven slaves. Joe Davis, alone, owned nearly two hundred and fifty. All but one opponent of the duel was a Whig. The Davises and Colonel Robins were Democrats. All but one of the seven anti-duelers lived in Vicksburg. The Davises, of course, lived on large plantations. The lines of division were not hard. Prentiss, as a Whig and a long time resident of Vicksburg was an exception among the Davis group, just as Nicholas Coleman, a Democrat, a rural resident, and an owner of twenty-seven slaves was an anomaly among the anti-duelists. Nevertheless, the pattern is clear enough to suggest the emergence of an alternative, more modern definition of gentleman.

Owning fewer slaves, living in a city of several thousand people, making their living off the cotton trade to be sure, but as investors, merchants, lawyers and not by overseeing its production directly--even Henry Vick lived fifty miles from his delta plantation--the urban anti-duelers would have been more cosmopolitan than many planters, more conscious of how gentlemen in other regions of the country were expected to behave. Thus, a step removed from the plantation elite, and a step closer to a national elite joined by an expanding urban and economic system, they began to reflect new sensibilities, alien perhaps to those predominant in the countryside, but very much in line with elites in New York or London. Henry Vick, amateur botanist, astute businessman with investments in Texas, perhaps in Cuba, symbol of Vicksburg's emerging urban elite, represented a different kind of gentleman. Next to him a Seargent S. Prentiss whose lifestyle of dueling, high stakes gambling, and heavy drinking, which ultimately brought him financial ruin and an early death, seemed anachronistic.

Vicksburg society continued to be much more heterogeneous than rural society. But urban residents ultimately came to accept diversity as a kind of order. They stopped trying to force consensus and instead accepted the inevitability of difference, which town residents expressed in a vigorous political party competition that simply did not exist in the countryside. Henry Vick and others like him

developed a brand of Whiggism that reflected their urban and urbane sensibilities, and which was quite unlike the Whiggery of rural planters, or of older urban elites like Prentiss. They drew strong reaction from certain quarters of Vicksburg society, immigrant workers in particular.⁵⁰

Notes

1. The 1860 census reported a population of 4580 for Vicksburg, including slaves. However, a more accurate count would include the city's suburbs even though they lay beyond the corporation limits. Including suburbs, Vicksburg's population neared 8000 according to H.C. Clarke, comp. General Directory for the City of Vicksburg (Vicksburg: H.C. Clarke, 1860), p. 73.
2. Clarke, General Directory, passim.
3. Clarke, General Directory, p. 74.
4. Study Data. The figure of 62 percent includes planters, farmers and overseers. The inclusion of those who gave their occupation as laborer, most of whom presumably worked on farms, would raise the figure to nearly 80 percent.
5. Artisans and mechanics expressed their fears of upriver competition in letters and articles written for local newspapers. See for example: Southern Mechanic (Vicksburg), April 14, 1838.
6. Bettie to Will Gwin, April 13, 1860, Kiger Family Papers, box 2 E 516, folder 2, NTC. In January, 1853, Bazil Kiger paid \$216 to an undisclosed number of Irishmen for completing 451 1/2 rods of ditch work. Buena Vista Plantation Record and Account Book, 1849-1857, Kiger Family Papers, box 2 E 522, folder 3, NTC.
7. J. M. Gibson, Memoirs of J. M. Gibson: Terrors of the Civil War and Reconstruction Days (1929), p. 11. Gibson, the father of the memorialist of the same name, hired Mindrop to be his overseer.
8. Edwin L. Sabin, ed. "Vicksburg, and After: Being the Experience of a Southern Merchant and Non-Combatant During the Sixties," The Sewanee Review 15 (October 1907), 484. The memoir was written anonymously, but historian Peter F. Walker found the author in the U. S. Census, Population

Schedules, Warren County 1850 and 1860, and identified him in his book Vicksburg: A People at War, 1860-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960). Kuner's business and residence are listed in Clarke, General Directory, pp. 26, 29.

9. MS Census, Free and Slave Population Schedules, Warren County, 1850 and 1860.

10. Local artisans were much more likely to complain of competition from northern manufacturers. See note 5 above.

11. Shugart (Henry Frederick) Account Book/Diary, microfilm, MDAH. For example, on January 3, 1839 Shugart sent Josh and David to town. Four days later they returned, and Shugart whipped Josh "for getting drunk and staying in town." Throughout this diary are recordings of slaves sent to Vicksburg. On average they stayed about a week. According to J.H. Ingraham, the majority of teamsters who drove wagons to and from Vicksburg from surrounding plantations were slaves: Ingraham, The South-west by a Yankee 2 vols. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968 [reprint of 1835 edition]), 2:170.

12. As is discussed below, Vicksburg's permanent residents worried about controlling the strangers who filled the town during winter months. See for example: Vicksburg Advocate and Register, September 16, 1831.

13. MS Census Population Schedules, Warren County 1850, 1860. The crude rate of persistence--the percentage of people present on the first census who are also present on the second--for Vicksburg household heads was 150 out of 535, or 28 percent. From the mortality tables presented in Appendix D, Tables D-1 and D-2 we can estimate that 146 heads of household died before the decade's end. Thus of the 389 who did not die 39 percent [$150/389 \times 100$] persisted.

14. Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum American South," Journal of American History ? (December 1983): 1182, argue that immigrants arrived in the South with a predisposition to oppose slavery. "Most urban workers," they write, "were born alien to the dominant characteristics of Southern culture," especially slavery. Opportunities for upward mobility, which in the South inevitably meant slave ownership, would have given immigrants good reason to adapt to their new society. That they did adapt is suggested by the support Vicksburg's immigrants gave to the Democratic and secessionist causes (see Chapter Nine).

15. MS Census, Free and Slave Population Schedules, 1850 and 1860.
16. MS Population Schedules for Warren County, 1850, 1860. Vicksburg Register, September 4, 1834. Although Smedes lived in Vicksburg in 1850 he owned a plantation on the south side of Vicksburg. See Sectional Indexes, Township 16, Range 3, sections 22, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 34.
17. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, September 16, October 7, October 14, 1831. Vicksburg Whig, December 18, 1860. Clarke, General Directory, pp. 53-54.
18. Woodville Republican July 18, 1835. L. S. Houghton to Henry Bosworth, July 10, 1835, transcribed copy in OCHM.
19. Woodville Republican, July 18, 1835.
20. L. S. Houghton to Henry Bosworth, July 10, 1835, transcribed copy in OCHM. This important document describes the crucial role of the local militia, which was probably responsible for minimizing hysteria and preventing the crisis from escalating into a bloody free-for-all.
21. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, January 29, 1834.
22. Harlan to Nell, November 24, 1848, Harlan Papers, box 2 D 270, Barker Texas History Collection, University of Texas, Austin.
23. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, April 9, 1836.
24. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, April 13, 1836.
25. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, April 9, 1836.
26. H. S. Fulkerson, Random Recollections of Early Days in Mississippi (Baton Rouge: Otto Claiborne, 1937), 97-99. According to Fulkerson the circuit court decided for the boatmen. Although the record of this initial decision has not been found, later events suggest that the city lost this legal battle on the grounds that it was exercising an authority not granted it by the state. In 1839 the state legislature granted the City of Vicksburg a new charter that included the right to levy a tax on all users of the public landing. The following year an amendment to the charter affirmed this right. In May, 1841, the boatmen again challenged the tax in court, but this time lost. In the case of William Harrison v. The Mayor and Council of Vicksburg (1844) the Mississippi High Court of Errors and Appeals affirmed the city's right to levy wharfrage, to tax the sales of their products, and to fine tax evaders. Vicksburg Whig,

March 4 and April 9, 1840. Harrison v. Mayor, 3 Smedes and M. 581.

27. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, September 16, 1831; October 7, 1831; March 22, 1832; June 14, 1832; February 26, 1835. Vicksburg Whig, June 5, 1844; July 29, 1845; March 20, 1846; March 25, 1848; March 26, 1850; December 18, 1860. Clarke, General Directory, pp. 48-54.

28. This profile of the voluntary association leadership is based on a lists of officers printed in: Clarke, General Directory, pp. 48-54; and in the Vicksburg Whig, December 18, 1860. Evidence for propertyholding, occupation, and place of birth came from the MS Population Schedules for Warren County, 1860.

29. Vicksburg Whig, December 18, 1860.

30. Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). Don Harrison Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-70 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

31. On women and voluntary societies, see: Nancy A. Hewitt, Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1984), 195-236; Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

32. Vicksburg Whig, March 26, 1850. The Ladies Benevolent Association received no mention alongside Vicksburg's other societies in the 1860 city directory, suggesting that it was gone by that date. See Clarke, General Directory, pp.75-76.

33. On the influence of evangelical religion on voluntary associations in the North see: Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers' Keeper: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1960); Charles I Foster, An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

34. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, January 27, 1838. Frances Allen Cabaniss and James Allen Cabaniss, "Religion in Antebellum Mississippi." Journal of Mississippi History 6 (January-October 1944), 202.

35. Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium. The parallels between Vicksburg and Rochester were as significant as their differences. Both towns grew rapidly in large part because of their location on a major transportation route (Rochester was situated on the Erie Canal). The established citizenry of both places felt threatened by the large numbers of migrants and newcomers. But while Rochester responded with revivals, Vicksburg responded with militias.

36. Vicksburg Whig, March 14, 1840.

37. Vicksburg Whig, December 18, 1860. In June, 1848, a mob dealt with a thief by whipping him "nearly to death."
Vicksburg Whig, June 6, 1848.

38.

TABLE 8-3

CROSS-TABULATION OF ORGANIZATION OFFICERS BY PLACE OF BIRTH

Organization	Place of Birth	
	South	Non-South
Militia	2	8
Temperance	8	5

$$\chi^2 = 3.97 \quad P < .05$$

SOURCES: U.S. Census, Population Schedules, Warren County, 1850 and 1860; Sons of Temperance officers in Vicksburg Whig, June 12, 1849 and Police Association Officers in same newspaper December 18, 1860. Other militia officers listed in H.C. Clarke, comp. General Directory for the City of Vicksburg (Vicksburg: H.C. Clarke, 1860), 53-54;

39. The calculation of network density was made for a matrix created from the list of association officers of 1860 compiled from Clarke, General Directory, pp. 48-54, the the Vicksburg Whig, December 18, 1860. On network analysis and the calculation of density see David Knoke and James H. Kuklinski, Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, Vol. 28, Network Analysis (Beverly Hills, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1982). Kin-network density of rural neighborhoods is discussed in chapter six.

40. Welles (Edward R.) diary, 1854-56, pp. 78-79, typescript in the MDAH.

41. Welles diary, p. 42.

42. Clarke, General Directory, pp. 49, 53.

43. Wilmuth S. Rutledge, "Duelling in Antebellum Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History 26 (August 1964), 187, 189. Jack K. Williams, Duelling in the Old South: Vignettes of Social History (College Station and London: Texas A & M University Press, 1980), 32-33.

44. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, November 8, 1837.

45. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, November 8, 1837. Interestingly, such defenses turned to accusations in comments on violent affairs in the surrounding countryside. After the lynching of a slave in Claiborne County the Vicksburg newspaper published an editorial that might have been written in the North: "The enormity of the guilt of the offender cannot be plead in palliation of the deep wound which such usurpations are calculated to inflict upon the free institutions of our beloved country." Advocate and Register, July 14, 1836.

46. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, January 27, 1838. Joseph C. Passmore to George W. Hunter, December 16, 1842, Passmore letters, copies in OCHM.

47. John Shannon, Jr. to Howard Morris, June 8, 1844, box 3, folder 28, Crutcher-Shannon Papers, MDAH. Vicksburg Sentinel, July 1 and July 8, 1844. Williams, Duelling in the Old South, pp. 32-33. A jury found Hagan's assailant not guilty on grounds of self defence.

48. Vicksburg Sentinel, June 5, 1844.

49. Vicksburg Sentinel, June 5, 1844.

50. Information on Henry Vick was compiled for the Study Data. He was partner in a Texas land company. Another partner had ties to Cuba, and actually died there, thus the possibility that Vick invested in Cuba as well. On Vick's interests in botany see: Moore, Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), pp. 27, 29. On Sergeant Prentiss see the romantic portrait by a contemporary, Joseph G. Baldwin, The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi: A Series of Sketches, with an Introduction and Notes by James H. Justus (New York: Appleton, 1853; reprint ed., Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), pp. 197-222.

CHAPTER 9
ORGANIZING A COUNTY COMMUNITY:
NEIGHBORHOODS, PARTIES AND THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT

In 1810 the state legislature established Warren County, and asked a commission of local taxpayers to find a suitable location for the courthouse. After surveying the more settled southern region of the new county, and consulting with their neighbors, the four commissioners decided on a spot near where the old Spanish road to the Walnut Hills passed close by the river, a location convenient to most people living in the county at that time. Here they established Warrenton, the seat of justice. Fifteen years later another commission moved the courthouse ten miles north to the new town of Vicksburg. Warrenton area residents were furious. Led by the Gibson and Hyland families they determined not to let Vicksburg's founders, who had already captured much of Warrenton's trade, steal their courthouse too. When the question was put to a vote, however, Warrenton's leaders simply could not muster enough support from around the county to place even one of their own on the commission of three that finally settled the matter.¹

The debate over the location of the courthouse left some feeling bitter. The written record of the event is spare, but locals more than a hundred and fifty years later tell how officials transferred deed books, probate files, county court minutes, all the official documents of life in Warren County, quietly after dark, so as not to provoke angry outbursts from the losers. Some descendants of south-end families still speak, jokingly now, of how north-end residents stole their courthouse.

Warrenton's leaders had good reasons to be angry. With the courthouse gone their town lost its only chance to become something more than the small village it was to remain. But the event had a greater significance. It marked a shift in the direction of Warren County's development as a social entity. Hitherto people had lived their lives primarily in the face-to-face, horizontally and inwardly organized worlds of family and neighborhood. The outside world seemed distant and of little importance. In time, however, as people began to turn their attention outward, they sought access to the vertical ties that linked them to the larger society, forming supra-local organizations to coordinate affairs and protect their interests over long distances. They also looked, with a new enthusiasm visible at election time, to the one organization that had been there all along but which had never really been relevant

until now: government. The location of the county seat thus became a matter of special interest.²

The outward turn and the fusion of Warren County's various rural neighborhoods and urban places into a larger, more complex organization is most visible in the growth of roads over the period from 1814 to 1860 (Figures 9-1, 9-2, and 9-3). At the earlier date only one road traversed the county from south to north, allowing a minimum of communication between settlements. By 1834 several new roads snaked their way through hilly countryside toward the county's two main river ports, at Warrenton in the county's south end and Vicksburg in the north end. By 1860 a dense network of roads created the image of a single unit, with all the many small settlements connected vertically to the central hub of Vicksburg. Neighborhoods continued to function as the primary arena for the mixing of family and friends, but they also became part of a larger economic, social, and political entity comprising the whole county.

The driving force behind the county's transformation was the unfailing energy of its residents. However self-contained rural neighborhoods seemed, their inhabitants never ceased pushing the peripheries of their worlds outward. They steadily improved the roads, bridges, and ferries that linked them with people and places beyond the immediate vicinity, pouring time, money, and sweat into improving transportation and communication with the same

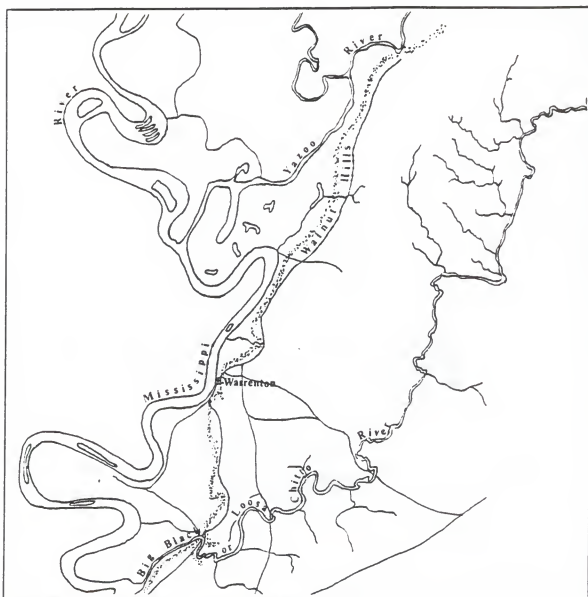


Figure 9-1. Warren County Roads, 1814.

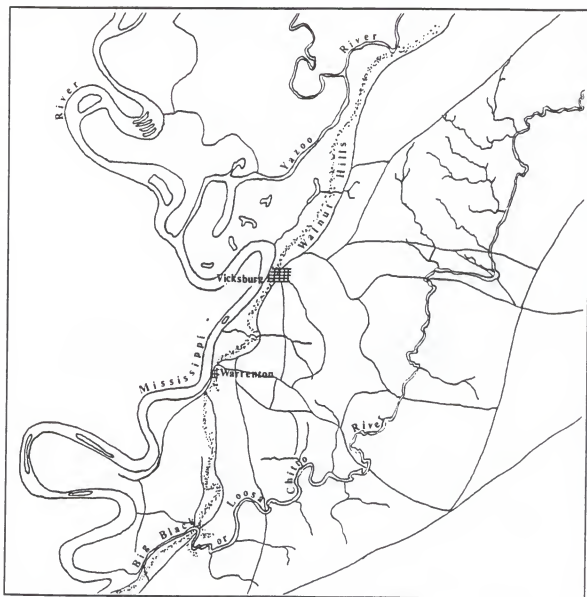


Figure 9-2. Warren County Roads, 1835.



Figure 9-3. Warren County Roads, 1860.

determination they showed when clearing fields and mending fences. In the process they broke down neighborhood isolation, extended their interests farther afield, and forged a larger economic, social, and political unit roughly contained within the county lines.

Such a transformation was not necessarily the conscious objective of the people responsible for it. But farmers would have attested to the difficulty of travel, whether to market or to a friend's house. They would also have said that they made such journeys nevertheless, even if he tried to keep them as short and infrequent as possible. Any improvement in the roads, by widening, or by building bridges, they welcomed because they made their lives easier. The better the roads, however, the farther and the more often they would be willing to travel, and the more willing they would be to produce a crop for market. Thus the improvement cycle began. An interest in improving transportation and communication connections and a commitment to production for distant markets grew together. The farmer's economic and social world consequently expanded to include people who once seemed distant and unimportant, people in other neighborhoods, town dwellers. At first a rider on horseback needed a day to travel from one side of the county to the other. With an improved road he could travel as far as Jackson in the same amount of time, and by stage coach. Railroad cut that same journey to a mere two

and a half hours, and put the once distant city of New Orleans within one long day's reach. Intended or not, steady development of the material links with the outside transformed Warren County society.³

Early settlers undertook the county's first improvements within the neighborhoods where they lived. In small groups they surveyed routes through the woods, designed bridges, constructed ferries. They pooled their labor to see the job through to the finish just as they did barn raisings. Joseph Davis and his neighbors built a series of levees around their homes to protect them all from flooding.⁴ In the opposite corner of the county six planters along the border of Warren and Hinds Counties took advantage of their location, plus their combined resources in land and labor, by jointly building a bridge across the Big Black River and collecting a toll from all travelers between Vicksburg and Jackson.⁵ Only on occasion did individuals or neighborhoods seek direct government assistance, and these tended to be for undertakings too large for one neighborhood. A group of planters from the vicinity of the open wood petitioned the legislature for assistance in building a road between their homes and the state capital at Jackson. With the support of a similarly interested group in Hinds County they won the legislature's consent, plus three hundred dollars to help cut costs.⁶

By the mid-1820s people looked beyond their own farms and neighborhoods for improvement opportunities elsewhere. Their successes at home encouraged them to repeat the process of land development and cotton production in other places. To do so they organized on a grander scale. In 1825 four planters from around the county, plus two lawyers and a doctor from Vicksburg met to discuss the possibility of procuring a bank charter.⁷ Two years later a branch of the state bank opened in Warren County, and shortly after that a second, the Planter's bank, with capital of one hundred thousand dollars "exclusive of the stock that may be subscribed there," opened its doors in Vicksburg.⁸ Banks were an essential means of pooling capital for the purchase and improvement of land.

Warren County's residents were not alone in their interest in developing new lands. These were the famous "flush times," when speculators and cotton planters with insatiable appetites for land, emboldened by the demonstrated success of cotton planting in the southwest--the magnificent mansions at Natchez, the overnight transformation of places like Warren County from pioneer settlement to thriving plantation belt--left their tired lands in South Carolina and Virginia and headed in great hordes for Alabama and Mississippi. A speculative whirlwind like no one had seen before, or would see again, seemed to

sweep up all before it, newcomers and old-timers alike, anyone and everyone with access to a little credit.⁹

Alexander McNutt purchased, then resold, 7,000 acres in the Mississippi delta north of Vicksburg.¹⁰ Job Baker purchased a large tract, "more land than he can cultivate," in the hills above Vicksburg. Over the next year he built a grist mill, cleared and planted two hundred acres, then sold his improvement for profit.¹¹ Henry Vick, his cousin John Wesley Vick, William Miles, and William Pescod borrowed money to form a land company in Texas.¹² The shareholders of the Planters' Bank purchased in the bank's name land all over the state for quick resale.¹³ Vicksburg's greatest speculator, clothing merchant J. J. Chewning, borrowed and invested madly until by 1840 when he tallied his holdings he owned: 815 acres and 39 slaves near Lake Providence, Louisiana; 1360 acres in Carroll County, Mississippi; 1526 acres and 31 slaves in Bolivar County, Mississippi; 1570 acres near the Sunflower River, in Washington County, Mississippi; 600 acres in Yazoo County Mississippi; 1000 acres in Crawford County, Arkansas; a lot with a house in Clinton, Mississippi; interest in the town of Pine Bluff, Arkansas; several lots in Vicksburg, plus acreage near the railroad and cotton press, a home, and five slaves in Warren County.¹⁴

Land was not the only opportunity that attracted speculators during these heady years. In 1834 a group of

Warren County investors, "in the name of the planting and commercial interests of the State," organized the Commercial and Railroad Bank of Vicksburg and announced the sale of four million dollars of stock, to enhance the availability of credit, to increase the circulating medium, and to promote internal improvements, in particular a railroad they planned to build between Vicksburg and Jackson.¹⁵ Of the twenty organizers whose backgrounds can be determined, all but four lived in Vicksburg. Among them were ten merchants, including one from Warrenton, three lawyers, three planters, and one manufacturer. Several of the merchants had close ties to local planters. William Pescod, for example, was close friends with the Vick family, one of whom was a commissioner. Erasmus Downs belonged to another of the county's oldest planter families. William R. Campbell had recently taken up planting himself, having acquired seventeen hundred acres on the chosen route. Lawyer and land speculator Alexander McNutt was close friends with cotton planter Joel Cameron and with Carmeron's wife, whom he married shortly after her husband's death.¹⁶

Vicksburg's merchants may have been the driving force behind the railroad venture, but they could not do it alone. Their success depended on their ability to unite much of the county behind them. Nor could the small plantation neighborhoods along the proposed line have managed such a project on their own. They had required government

assistance just to build a dirt road. Thus, Vicksburg merchants whose businesses depended on selling supplies and manufactures to residents in the interior of the county and state and interior planters whose livelihood depended on getting their cotton to market organized to pool capital, purchase land, and construct a railroad that would benefit all parties.¹⁷

The role of government in matters of economic development had always been minimal. Neighborhoods built their own roads and bridges, chose their own supervisors, conducted their own surveys, supplied their own labor and materials. County officials simply approved what neighborhoods had already decided. Occasionally a large project required governmental funding and supervision. The Spanish colonial government had constructed the road from the Big Black to the Walnut Hills. Thirty years later the state legislature appropriated funds for a road from the hills to Jackson. Small scale improvements, however, were handled locally, until locals began to expand their horizons. When they did, they sought government protection of their increasingly far-flung interests. The role and authority of public officials in Warren County consequently expanded, superseding the political order of small neighborhoods.

Authorized by an interested electorate to direct county affairs, officials lost their earlier reluctance to

interfere with neighborhood affairs. Neighborhood business became county business. Elias Hankinson lost to the Board of Police the right to set rates for the ferry that ran between his property on both sides of the Big Black. In earlier days he operated his ferry for the income it provided, but also as a service to his friends and kinfolk who lived nearby. Fees acceptable to both parties had always been worked out on a personal basis. This informal mode of operation no longer worked once the growing number of travelers to and from Vicksburg formed the bulk of the ferry's passengers. Hankinson had no interest in whether or not someone he had never seen before got across the river. What business was it of his? Why should he or one of his slaves leave more pressing concerns to assist every wayfarer? Helping a friend was a duty and a pleasure, but he would charge strangers for their inconvenience. Travellers, and the county in general, saw Hankinson as providing an essential service, not a neighborly favor. His informal and whimsical way of conducting business was too unpredictable. On behalf of the county the Board of Police saw to it that the ferry operated all the time, that no one was refused service except during high water when travel was dangerous, and that rates were fair and reliable. Operators who found such regulations objectionable had only one alternative: They could turn their ferry over to a keeper hired by the county, and receive no compensation.¹⁸

The board did not always oppose the interests of ferry keepers. In regulating their number and location they sometimes protected them. John Miller received monopoly privileges when the board prohibited all other persons from conveying people, animals, or carriages across the Mississippi River within three miles of his ferry. Competition, board members reasoned, brought frequent changes in ownership and shifts in location that added an element of unpredictability to county trade and travel. When Henry Lewis petitioned for approval to begin a ferry service across the Mississippi the board made no decision without first consulting Miller to make sure that he thought there was sufficient demand to warrant a second service. In return for such protection the county reserved the right to set Miller's rates.¹⁹

Officials tried to accommodate any individuals they crossed, and even compensated them, sometimes, as when they sequestered private property for public projects. However, they exercised final authority. For example, when the county Board of Police decided to widen a road on the outskirts of Vicksburg in 1839 they appointed a commission to do the surveying and ordered the razing of all structures, buildings and fences that stood in the way. In another case, the Board ordered commissioners to "obtain if possible the consent of the owners of the land through which said road

may be laid out," and thereby minimize the "charge or damage to the county." But while county officials were prepared to bargain on the amount of compensation paid those whose land would be taken for the new road, the actual location of the road was not negotiable.²⁰

Wrangling over county roads created conflict between neighborhood and county interests. It also strained relations between private and public interests. Neighborhoods had managed to accommodate both. Now the county struggled to do the same. Farmers had to fence their fields to prevent open-ranged livestock from damaging crops. If a road ran through a field, then they also had to build gates. This was an added expense, but worse still, it left their crops vulnerable to the careless traveller who might leave a gate unlatched.²¹ As a rule, surveyors tried to plot roads around privately owned fields. This became difficult to do, however, as farmers cultivated more and more acreage. Landowners found the other alternative, to run fences along roadsides, prohibitively expensive. In a series of incidents beginning in the late 1830s, several people simply strung fences across roads, without providing gates. Officials fined the offenders two dollars for every twenty-four hours that the fences remained standing, putting an end to that, although in some cases at great expense to offenders. A particularly stubborn Alexander Magruder left his illegal fences standing for a year, forcing travellers

to detour or climb over. His fines totalled over seven hundred dollars. Wiser men quickly conceded the board's authority to protect the interests of the county even at the expense of certain individuals.²²

That authority continued to expand. Before landowners could even enclose a field that had a road running through it they had to receive permission from the board. By the late 1840s the board required publication in a Vicksburg newspaper of all petitions for gates, to inform distant people who might have reason to oppose the plans so that they might come forward and express their views.²³ Where to place a road was no longer a neighborhood decision. The very wording of the law that granted authority over roads to county Boards of Police expressed the change in local decision making. All roads were to be laid out by a commission of disinterested citizens selected by the board.²⁴ Of course commissioners were only disinterested in the individual and neighborhood considerations that had determined where roads would or would not go in earlier days. They were very much interested in the county as a whole. Distance from individual neighborhoods enabled county government to ignore the personal relationships that were central to more local affairs. When a group of neighbors petitioned the board to have a road overseer with whom they disagreed replaced board members refused, arguing that it was "not in the power of the board to remove [overseers]

except for neglect of duty." Personal squabbles mattered not at all.²⁵

The county government's largest development project was the construction of a system of levees to protect the fertile bottom lands along the Mississippi from inundation. Residents along the river for a stretch of fifty miles would have to be organized so that land could be acquired, taxes assessed and collected, building completed to a common standard, and maintenance provided for. Success would not be achieved if the project proceeded on a smaller scale, piecemeal fashion. A single hole in the wall jeopardized the lands and levees of neighborhoods miles down river. To work properly a levee system had to seal off protected land completely. All segments had to be interconnected, uniformly built, and incorporated into a larger system. There could be no missing links in the chain or else the river would always find an opening.

As early as 1811, a year after the state legislature established Warren County, residents in and near the county seat sought government assistance in constructing a levee in front of the town of Warrenton. The cost of the project was, as it would remain for some time, an insurmountable obstacle. The state legislature authorized a lottery to raise the three thousand dollars needed for the levee, but tickets were never sold, and construction never begun. Officials deemed it "impracticable" to try to raise money

during the cash-scarce years that Americans fought British. Flooding continued, "leaving waste and desolate a vast body of most excellent Bottom Lands filling them with marshes and stagnant pools of water." Two decades later found Warrenton residents still trying to raise the funds for a levee, but the cost always proved greater than the taxes property-holders were willing to spend on the project. Moreover, the people who actually wanted the embankment were always too few to pay for such an expensive project on their own, and too powerless to persuade others of its need. Eventually Warrenton got its levee, a low and short one that never worked properly. Water regularly backed up behind it and onto the town's streets.²⁶

During the early decades of the nineteenth century few of the county's rural residents had any interest in levee building. Most lived above the bluff, beyond the river's reach. Moreover, the regularly inundated marshes served as excellent grazing areas for early cattle herds. Once the county seat moved to the bluffs of Vicksburg the urgency of a good levee at Warrenton diminished. Only the cotton planters near the river's edge needed levees, and they usually built their own. The fertile floodplain, superior in quality to interior farmland, was the best cotton land in the South, but required substantial inputs in capital and labor to realize its advantages. In particular, it had to be drained and protected from flooding. Consequently, all but

the wealthiest farmers settled elsewhere. Joseph Davis built one of the first plantations on Warren County's rich bottom land, at a bend in the river below Warrenton. Arriving from Natchez with over fifty slaves he immediately set his hands to work on the construction of a levee. Until safe from high water there was no point in clearing, planting, or erecting buildings. In the late antebellum years, however, farmers with few slaves, if any, began to settle in lower regions despite the great risk of being washed away. The best land on high ground was taken. Moreover, they wanted to plant cotton, and on soil so rich the risks seemed smaller.

As the unprotected flood plain filled up with voters the county and state governments came under new pressure to organize the construction of a levee system. But government was slow to act. A consensus on this internal improvement project remained elusive. Petitioners circulated, levee boards planned, engineers surveyed, tax collectors assessed, but the county continually backed down before it collected money or initiated construction. The state authorized the sale of public lands in low-lying areas as a way to raise funds and thereby keep taxes low, and to further encourage the settlement on the flood plain of people willing to pay taxes for levees. Objections to the project persisted. A single embankment following the river from the bluff above Warrenton to the southern county line would, argued one group of petitioners, "add materially to the taxable

property of the county and greatly promote the interests of all parties directly concerned." Other groups whose lands were subjected to floods less frequently, or who had levees of their own that worked well enough, objected to the plan, believing that they stood to lose more in taxes than gain by a county levee system. When Warrenton residents had first tried to gather support for a levee project Royal Pace, a nearby planter, complained that a levee would raise the level of the river and flood lands that under normal conditions were safe from inundation. Years later Joseph Davis made the same argument. For the moment he sat safe and dry behind a slave made wall of earth that surrounded him and three neighbors, but he feared the construction of more levees would raise the water level above existing embankments. He therefore wanted no part of the project, certainly was not about to help pay for it, and urged his neighbors to join him in resisting. Obviously this was no ordinary plantation neighborhood, for it included, besides Joe Davis, Warren County's wealthiest resident, his brother Jefferson, the future President of the Confederacy, and one Henry Turner, brother-in-law to wealthy Natchez planter and state governor John A. Quitman (Quitman himself owned several hundred acres adjoining Turner.). The residents of Davis Bend were rich enough to construct a successful series of dikes without government assistance. Their desire and more especially their ability to remain aloof from public

projects blocked the schemes of county developers. Davis and his neighbors owned nearly one third of the most valuable bottom land in the county below Vicksburg. Their share of the tax burden, over two thousand dollars, over ten percent of the cost of the whole project, was absolutely essential to the county's plans for developing its prime cotton region.²⁷

By the start of the Civil War Warren County residents were still debating the merits and expense of a county levee system. The problem was that the project was simply too overwhelming an undertaking for local government, let alone private citizens, the small "kingdom" of Davis Bend notwithstanding. The task was particularly difficult in Warren County. Not everyone needed protection from flooding. Most county residents did not live on flood plain. Thus, the whole county never organized for the project; only a portion did, and their combined resources were insufficient, particularly when the richest planters refused to participate. But interest in the bottom land remained so long as cotton ruled that part of the South. To take advantage of the rich alluvial soil developers would have to step forth from their small neighborhoods, their counties, their states even, and organize on a grand scale. The great earthworks that eventually lined the Mississippi would have to await the fantastic resources of the early twentieth-century federal government.²⁸

In their efforts to manage development projects too large for single neighborhoods to undertake Warren County residents turned to their county government, investing it with more authority than it had had earlier. In the process they transferred the scepter of leadership from family patriarch to elected official. Of course that transfer remained incomplete. Neighborhoods and patriarchs persisted as part of the county's social structure, as part of the experience of living in a slave plantation society. That experience, moreover, had an effect on the development of electoral politics because it shaped the way people looked at government. To planters, their kin and neighbors, the county appeared as a big neighborhood, its leaders as patriarchs who would apply their resources in land, slaves, and money to the benefit of the whole community, just as they continued to do in each neighborhood.

Thus the county promoted development for the benefit of the community. It continued to do so throughout the antebellum period, both positively by raising funds and granting charters and negatively by regulating and policing. Officials restrained competition by granting monopolies to ferry operators and bridge builders, by fining developers whose reckless pursuit of profits endangered the community. Farmers unable to afford the cost of fencing pastures along the railroad line lost stock to the trains. Within a two or

three month period one Mr. Miller "lost seven mules valued at fifteen hundred dollars, and he had to compromise with the road at half price."²⁹ But the directors of a railroad company were not likely to take seriously the complaints of scattered individuals. They did pay heed to government, however. On occasion excavations and piles of dirt from track line construction and repairs obstructed adjacent roads. Travelers complained to county officials who then fined company directors. Similarly, when the railroad company allowed its bridges to fall into a dangerous state of disrepair the Board of Police chastised directors with threats of prosecution. Following a yellow fever epidemic the Board of Police appointed flour and pork inspectors "to protect the community against unwholesome provisions being vended among them." It had inspected and licensed liquor peddlers long before that. In 1832 just as county government was assuming responsibilities in organizing economic development it also took over the responsibility of caring for the poor.³⁰

County elections reflected the gradual amalgamation of rural neighborhoods into a county community, although tendencies toward localism persisted. Wide variation in voting patterns among the county's towns and rural neighborhoods continually characterized local elections. The election of sheriff could be hotly contested in some places, and won by a landslide in others. In 1835 the winning

candidate for sheriff polled 60 percent of the total vote, but received only 26 percent of the ballots cast at one precinct while garnering 85 percent at another. Such neighborhood variation remained the salient feature of local elections throughout the antebellum years. In the 1858 election for sheriff the leader of a pack of five candidates carried only 38 percent of the total votes cast in the first heat, but won as many as 60 percent in one place, and as few as 3 percent elsewhere. Three of the contenders carried at least one precinct.

Localism proved a difficult barrier to campaigning politicians. Adam Gordon sought a seat in the state senate in 1823 for the district comprised of Claiborne County, where he lived, and Warren County. Gordon lost the election badly, polling only half the votes of winner Thomas Freeland. He ran a much closer race in his home county than he did in Warren, where he received only 13 votes.³¹ After the election Gordon claimed that his campaign had been sabotaged by the publication of a defamatory hand-bill, or "lie-bill" as he called it, fully intending the pun. Gordon believed that the assault on his character would have had little impact had the bill "been confined in its circulation to the limits of Claiborne county, wherein my course of conduct through life has been known to be consistent and honorable." But, he claimed, the bill's circulation in Warren County, where he was a stranger to

many folks, had destroyed his chances.³² Gordon may have lost the election in Warren County anyway, "lie-bill" or no "lie-bill." As he was well aware, Warren County residents were unacquainted with him. Voters simply preferred known quantities over unknown, and they knew few people beyond the vicinity of their homes. Jacob Hyland, a third candidate in this election, easily defeated Gordon at the polls in his home county of Warren. Gordon just as easily routed Hyland in Claiborne County. At the precinct level in Claiborne County--precinct data for Warren County is not available--Hyland won the neighborhood of Rocky Spring, located just across the Big Black River from Warren County, but fared poorly in more distant neighborhoods. Only the winner, Thomas Freeland, acquired a following in both counties, perhaps because he had gained some notoriety as a delegate to the state constitutional convention six years earlier, or perhaps because he owned some land in Warren County, although he had never lived there.³³

Localism never disappeared from electoral politics. Figure 9-4 compares precinct with county aggregate voting patterns in elections for governor and sheriff. Each plot was calculated by averaging the differences between the total vote given a winning candidate and the vote given that same candidate at each precinct. Thus, points higher up the y-axis reflect greater disparity between precinct and county aggregate patterns.

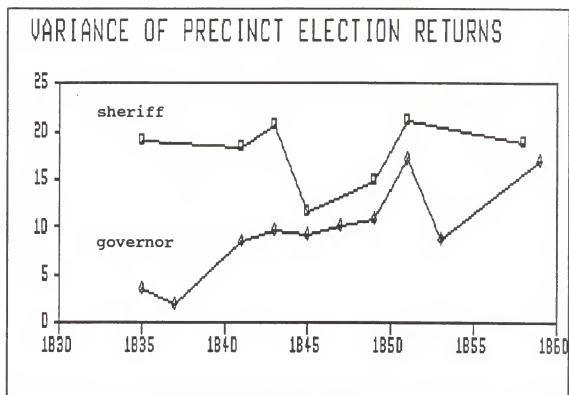


Figure 9-4. Average Percentage Difference Between Individual Precinct Support for Winning Candidate and County Aggregate Support for Winning Candidate, in Elections for Sheriff and Governor over the Period 1835-1859.

During the 1840s neighborhood variation diminished somewhat in county sheriff's elections, reflecting the integration of Warren County's neighborhoods and towns into a single community. Even then the proportion of votes given to the winning candidate at individual precincts varied from the county average by more than ten percent. In addition, during the same period neighborhood variation from county-wide pattern actually became more apparent in state gubernatorial elections. In particular, as Figure 9-5

indicates, the advent of two-party competition was crucial in drawing neighborhood political patterns into supra-local politics. Each point represents the percentage of votes the winner received at a particular polling station. Clearly, variation between precincts, and from election to election, characterized voting patterns in all county elections. However, not until 1841 did elections for governor follow a pattern-of-no-pattern typical of county elections. When state government became more important, and elections for governor became more contested, neighborhoods extended their idiosyncratic patterns to state elections.

The persistence of localism in Warren County politics was consistent with the structure of its rural neighborhoods. Within a context of close interpersonal association, often between kin and characterized by dependency and patriarchy, the heads of extended families would have exerted their influence to rally neighbors on behalf of favorite candidates. Lopsided contests were an inevitable result of local social and power structures.³⁴ In sheriff's elections between 1835 and 1851 the winning candidate at Warrenton received on average a landslide 84 percent of the ballots counted at that precinct. In some elections the winner claimed over ninety percent of the vote. In state elections Warrenton voters gave an average of over 70 percent of their ballots to their favorite candidate

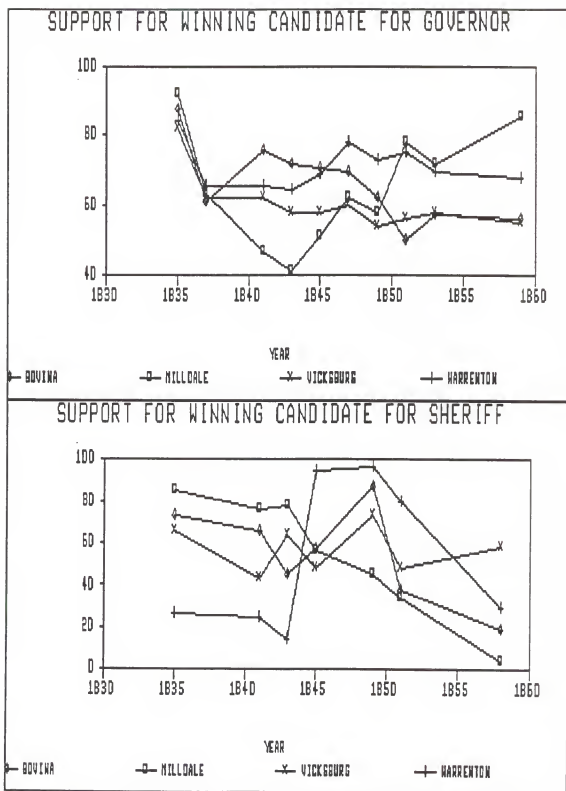


Figure 9-5. Percentage of Votes Received at Individual Polling Stations by Winning Candidate.

for governor. Elections at Milldale were just as lopsided, although voters in that precinct tended to oppose the candidate favored by the majority of voters at Warrenton. At Bovina the vote usually split somewhat more evenly than in other rural precincts, although lopsided elections with winning candidates taking over sixty percent of the vote occurred more often than not. In contrast to most rural areas, elections in the town of Vicksburg tended to be quite close, with winners in state and local contests receiving on average only 60 percent of the vote. Gubernatorial elections were particularly close in town. No families dominated and directed the voting patterns of Vicksburg's heterogeneous population, with its various ethnic and occupational groups, and its large number of newcomers to Mississippi.

At first glance the cleavages of local elections do not appear to have been duplicated in state elections. However, closer inspection reveals some important continuities. Over the whole period for which precinct level data exist a split between the south and north halves of the county marked every election for sheriff. Typically, whenever the voters at Warrenton cast the majority of their ballots for the eventual winner the voters at Milldale voted for someone else, and vice versa. The reason for the division cannot be known for certain, but in all probability it dated back to the hard feelings stirred by the long debate over the moving of the courthouse. Voters near Warrenton and Milldale cast

their ballots overwhelmingly for the candidate from or nearest to their own district, and flatly refused to support the man from the other precinct. Bovina's location between Milldale and Warrenton helps explain the more closely contested elections in that precinct. Voters at Bovina owed no more allegiance to the people to the north than to the south.

In gubernatorial contests after 1840 a large majority of Warrenton's voters always favored the Whig Party candidate. Milldale residents, continuing the county's north-south split, were more inclined toward the Democratic Party candidates, giving them a majority of their votes on two occasions. In the 1840 presidential election only Milldale gave less than seventy percent of its votes to Harrison.³⁵ Milldale's leanings toward the Democracy may have begun when one of their own, Alexander G. McNutt, ran as a Democrat for two terms as governor, winning both times. Of course, that raises the question of why McNutt, a planter, speculator, and bank board member was a Democrat? Perhaps his party preference stemmed in part from his antipathy for the Whigs from the south-end of the county. In any case, by running for governor McNutt made it easy for his neighbors to continue their opposition to Warrenton's residents.

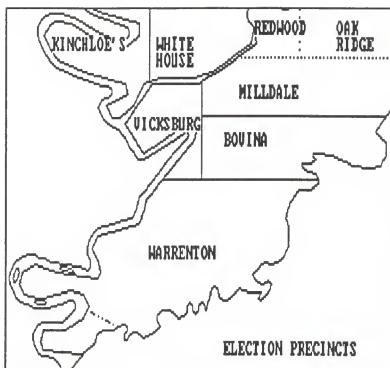


Figure 9-6. Warren County Election Precincts, 1850.

Evidence will not permit any demonstration of family and local loyalties influencing individuals at the polls. Nevertheless, political events were social events. Not just voters, but women and children, too, attended the frequent debates held at local camp grounds or springs. Usually someone donated a side of beef for a barbecue. Others brought their fiddles. Soon more people were up threading "the mazes of the cotillion" than listening to the speakers stumping under the trees but a short distance away.³⁶ In this setting little wonder voting patterns were consistent with neighborhood structures of society and authority, and

with a history of alliances and disputes older than Whigs and Democrats.

Local history persisted in local elections, and apparently in state contests as well, much to the dismay of national party organizers. On one occasion the leaders of the county Whigs called a meeting to discuss the prospects for nominating party candidates for local offices, sheriff in particular. Worried at first about maintaining party unity, leaders left the meeting secure in their belief that "all jealousy about the selection of candidates" had been quelled, that "every portion of the county [was] to be represented." But before a second meeting could be held to actually nominate party candidates men from around the county stepped forward on their own and announced their intentions to run for office. The local Whig convention never happened. Party leaders reluctantly concluded that "the people seem disposed to let matters take their own course, without the aid of nominations." Candidates for county offices ran without party affiliation. Over all, for reasons discussed below, Warren County voters found the pull of the Whigs strong enough to give the party their continual collective support. But Warrenton and Milldale voters took with them to the polls the additional considerations of family and neighborhood.³⁷

Rural neighborhoods continued to exist through the period of party competition as discrete social and political

entities, with their unique structures of patriarchal authority embedded in the slave plantation economy. Deference came naturally to Warren County's small- and non-slaveholders; leadership came just as naturally to planters. Both parties respected the priority of this arrangement because it was in their material interests to do so. Non-slaveholders depended on neighboring planters who controlled valuable productive resources for both access to and protection from markets. Planters in turn relied on the support of dependents in struggles with competing elites for access to the privileges of government. Within this context democracy and electoral politics acquired a unique meaning: Dependents and clients were free to support their local patrons in contests with elites from elsewhere, from the other side of the county, from Natchez, from the North.³⁸

The framers of the new state constitution endeavored to remove some of the effects of patriarchy and deference on electoral politics. Until 1832 the territorial governor, and then the state legislature, appointed all county judges. In that year the new constitution, hailed by historians as typical of the democratic reforms that marked the Age of Andrew Jackson, allowed an electorate of adult free men to choose their local officials. Moreover, it split the authority of the old county court, in which legislative, executive, and judicial power had been combined, between an administrative and legislative Board of Police and a civil

Court of Probate. Government by planter nabobs was to be no more.³⁹

The new constitution did alter county politics. In earlier days local government mirrored informal structures of authority. That is to say, they acknowledged the importance of kinship and neighborhood leadership. In 1820 the state legislature confirmed Jacob Hyland's unofficial position of prominence as head of one of the wealthiest and best connected families in the county by appointing him Justice of the Quorum. The next year Hyland's brother-in-law took a place on the bench as Judge of Probate. Andrew Glass, for several years a partner in business with Hyland's brother, and also connected to the Hyland family by marriage, won the most powerful local elected office, that of sheriff. The three men thus stood atop family, neighborhood and county. Of course, other neighborhoods had their leaders, and not all could hold public office. But at that time public office meant little, particularly to those who lived at a distance from the county seat. It was no coincidence that Jacob Hyland's plantation abutted the seat of justice. But his position as Justice of Quorum gave him little authority in neighborhoods other than in his own, where he was already leader even before he took his place on the bench.

By 1835, the situation had changed. Government wielded authority, and local leaders actively sought public office.

Three years following the constitutional convention, William Mills, a Vicksburg attorney with no apparent connections to prominent local families, was elected Judge of Probate. E. W. Morris, another Vicksburg resident with no connections to leading families, won election to sheriff. Only the new Board of Police maintained some connection to rural neighborhoods and prominent slaveholding families. John Cowan was closely associated with the Vick family, as was E. G. Cook, whose family had enjoyed power and prestige in the north end of the county since their arrival two decades earlier. Jesse Evans, another elected member of the Board of Police, belonged to a large family in the Red Bone neighborhood near Warrenton. Kinship and neighborhood, however, did not connect board members to each other, or any of them to the judge, or to the sheriff.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the newly elected officeholders were connected to each other. They all shared the privileges of the county's economic elite. Indeed, from 1810 to 1860 the members of Warren County's government owned considerably more land and in particular more slaves than household heads did on average. Individually, some non-slaveholders did win elections. In a given year about one in five county officials owned no slaves. Similarly, the county's great planters, the Joseph Davises and Henry Turners, men who possessed hundreds of slaves, rarely held elected office. They campaigned only on occasion; voters tended to reject

them when they did, perhaps because they appeared as simply too aristocratic for a supposedly democratic society. Nevertheless, most officeholders were slaveholders, and large slaveholders at that. In 1850, for example, masters elected to a position in county government sometime during the preceding decade owned on average twenty slaves, a figure that nearly placed them among the richest ten percent of the county's household heads. Throughout the antebellum years, Warren County's public officials, elected and appointed, consistently came from at least the richest twenty percent of the county's household heads.

Thus the new constitution and the opening of electoral politics did not really remove the slaveholding elite as a group from public office. Indeed, as late as 1850 the difference in property-holding between office holders and non-office holders was greater than in the years preceding the reforms.⁴¹ Moreover, the new constitution did not stop patriarchs from rallying their kin and neighbors on behalf of particular candidates, as the returns at Warrenton and Milldale indicate. Variation in precinct election returns continued despite constitutional reforms.⁴²

The continued selection of leaders from the wealthiest strata of the local population is particularly remarkable, for it contradicts the usual picture of the expansion of democracy during the Age of Jackson. What it indicates, however, is the persistence of hierarchical social

structures and corresponding ideas of deferential government. Change did not occur overnight. In his study of political transformation in early nineteenth-century Massachusetts historian Ronald P. Formisano described a deferential-participant politics resulting from "the existence of clear social distinctions which continued to shape behavior even as formal and outward displays of deference weakened."⁴³ Nowhere did social distinctions persist as they did in rural neighborhoods in the South's plantation districts. A yeoman's or small slaveowner's deference to the local planter was more than just an old habit. It reflected the continuation of patriarchal structures of authority within the face-to-face world of the rural neighborhood even as democracy expanded in electoral politics.

Warren County voters expressed a readiness to reject eighteenth-century notions of deference during the election of delegates to the constitutional convention in 1832. County resident Eugene Magee, a "whole hog" democrat who advocated the end of property qualifications and the election of all state and county offices, won the election for the state senatorial district. At the convention he distinguished himself by writing the majority opinion on the question of judiciary reform. Joseph Davis also ran for election to the constitutional convention as representative of Warren County. He lost badly. In 1817 a member of

Mississippi's first constitutional convention, a one-time Natchez lawyer and a well known "aristocrat," Davis won only 39 votes out of 758 votes cast. Judge Alex Covington, whose background was similar to Davis's, received a paltry 17 votes. The "whole hog" candidates, in contrast, each won over 200 votes.⁴⁴

Democracy, however, was never really the issue. This was no uprising of Andrew Jackson's "common man." Rather, the new constitution represented the successful efforts of wealthy slaveholders in newer regions of the state to crack the monopoly on important public offices, the judiciary in particular, held by Natchez elites since the enactment of the first state constitution. As early as 1824 one local resident had complained of the "most odious feature in our code," referring to "that system of partial legislation which has obtained in relation to the city of Natchez," and which instituted a line of distinction between the "powder-headed gentry" of Adams County and the rabble elsewhere in the state. Before long "we must doff the hat, and bow the suppliant knee, to the lords and the dukes and the princes of Natchez." Not for eight years would the people finally have their day, led by "democrats" like Eugene Magee of Warren County, owner of a plantation and sixty-seven slaves. Only three men in Warren County owned more. "Aristocrat" Joseph Davis was one.⁴⁵

The absence of ideological conflict within Warren County enabled voters to collectively rebel against the Nabobs of Natchez. A true democratic uprising of farmers against a planter aristocracy would necessarily have split the county along class lines. The bonds of family and dependency within each neighborhood, however, precluded divisions between slaveholders and non-slaveholders. But while the county's horizontal social ties remained firm within each settlement, its vertical ties linking neighborhoods together had not yet hardened. In this context two-party politics, when it arrived during Jackson's presidency, no more divided the county along ideological lines than had the debate over the state constitution. In Warren County party competition between Whigs and Democrats for the most part expressed neighborhood and family loyalties, not profound differences in ideology.

President Andrew Jackson's removal in 1833 of federal revenues from the Bank of the United States provided the occasion for the formation of a Whig opposition in Mississippi the following year. Jackson, once unshakably popular in the southwest, had lost some supporters with his continuing partnership with the hated Martin Van Buren. Nevertheless, in 1832 the president ran unopposed, although he appeared on the ballot with another vice presidential candidate, Philip P. Barbour, a slaveholder from Virginia. Jackson's handling of public lands continued to erode his

support in Mississippi, where investors and speculators like Warren County's William L. Sharkey and John I. Guion believed the federal government was keeping the price of land high to appease eastern manufacturers who worried about losing laborers and consumers to the west. But the bank war, and the subsequent brief panic in Mississippi, led finally to the organization of an opposition.⁴⁶

In Warren County the Whig Party found its support among those who gazed outward beyond their neighborhood or town, beyond their county, even beyond their region. Commercial interests in Vicksburg and in the countryside formed the backbone of the party locally. These were the very people who stood to lose the most from Jackson's war with the bank, but who could also see the possibilities of Henry Clay's expansive American System. Merchants and lawyers made up half of the group of active Whigs in town. Planters dominated the countryside Whigs, each of whom owned an average of thirty slaves. Both groups speculated in new lands in the northern half of the state, in Arkansas, in Texas. They also invested in internal improvements, railroads especially, to guarantee that cotton coming from and manufactures headed into the interior of the state would all pass over Vicksburg's wharves, through the stores, warehouses, and account books of the town's merchants. In all their ventures the support of government was crucial, particularly in maintaining a stable currency and sound

banking system. Behind the county's commercial elite stood smaller businessmen--urban artisans, country storekeepers, ferrymen, dairy farmers--who while not in a position to speculate in railroads and land nevertheless were part of a commercial network that linked them to Vicksburg and beyond.

Of course, not everyone was a Whig. Most were, but a large minority voted for Democratic candidates in every election. Indeed, some staunch Warren County Democrats were virtually indistinguishable from the Whigs. Men like Alexander McNutt, for example, lawyer, land speculator, railroad builder, frustrate efforts to differentiate party supporters on the basis of economic standing or personal attitudes. On average Democrats owned fewer slaves than did Whigs, but the presence within the group of individual slaveholders such as McNutt who owned forty slaves skewed the relationship between party and slaveholding enough to make it statistically insignificant. And while artisans were more likely to be found among Democrats, and merchants among Whigs, these differences were quite small, a matter of a few percentage points. The greatest difference between the active members of both parties was their place of origin. Southerners dominated the Whigs, while northern and foreign-born elements, Irish especially, had a greater presence in the local Democratic Party.⁴⁷

Political cleavages seemed to have hardened in Vicksburg in part around the presence of immigrants. In 1839

the Irish Catholics created something of a stir in Vicksburg when Father O'Reily arrived to establish a church. Leading Whig Thomas Anderson in a series of letters with O'Reily publicly proclaimed his "astonishment" that anyone would "submit his neck to the yoke of priestly domination." Democrats appealed for calm. In later years Democratic editors, their party by then the choice of immigrant voters nation wide, poked fun at Whig Party efforts to shed its Americanist colors and woo the foreign-born. But in Warren County politics ethno-cultural issues remained confined to Vicksburg. Even there they seem not to have been as salient as in some northern cities where immigrants were more numerous, although this may be a reflection of biases in the historical record. Masses of people, many of them immigrants, stayed but briefly in Vicksburg, too briefly to have gotten their names on party lists. However, foreign elements drew attacks from militias and mobs. Surly they drew attacks at the polls, too. Notwithstanding the influence of immigrants on Vicksburg voting patterns, differences between active members of both parties were minimal.⁴⁸

Alexander McNutt's efforts at bank reform during his two consecutive terms as governor demonstrated how he and his Whig opponents were in important ways cut from the same cloth. Driven by recalcitrant directors McNutt moved from a moderate position of bank reform to embrace the radical step

of repudiation of bank bonds floated by the state. But he was not opposed to banks on principle. After all, he had been one of the founders of Vicksburg's Rail Road Bank, an institution which Democrats distinguished as "useful" because it fostered internal improvements, unlike so many other banks that were nothing more than the tools of driveling picayune swindlers.⁴⁹ By law, however, that bank's profits were restricted to seven percent. Moreover, the legislature had reserved the right of "visitation." McNutt understood the necessity of banks but believed that the state had to keep a watchful eye over the directors of such institutions to ensure that greed did not get the better of them to the detriment of the community they were supposed to serve. As governor he tried to enforce the terms of the banks' charters. When they refused to seat government representatives at their directors meetings, and failed to issue specie payments as required McNutt threatened repudiation as a way of chastising bank directors for their irresponsible and incorrigible behavior.⁵⁰

Democrats, at least those like McNutt from plantation districts, shared with Whigs a belief in a hierarchical society in which the deference of the lower orders balanced the patriarchal responsibilities of elites. Moreover, neither group was ready to unleash the creative energies of individuals freed of community restraint. In conflicts of interests between the individual and the group, the group

took precedence. Where they differed was over how the balance between higher and lower orders, and between individuals and the group was best preserved. Whigs tended to trust that society's property-holding leaders would collectively live up to their responsibilities to the community, although certain individuals might go astray. Democrats were not as confident. They worried more about the individuals who in their pursuit of material rewards sometimes abandoned community interests. Thus, both Whigs and Democrats saw government as an extension of patriarchal authority, as a means of both assisting property-holders in their development schemes and in holding them to their responsibilities to the community.

Underlying bipartisan ideological consensus were the slave plantation economy and the rural neighborhoods of planters and their kinfolk. Through their expectations as voters and perceived responsibilities as representatives Warren County residents extended the patriarchal ideal--a legacy of family and neighborhood politics in a slave society--to elected government. At the same time the plantation economy, based on the production of a staple for export, gave both parties a similar orientation toward money, markets, the world in general beyond their neighborhoods. It created the desire for banks, railroads, levees, not to mention the desire for profits, that had caused people to turn to government in the first place. The

slave plantation economy, therefore, pushed the South forward even as it held it back. The resulting culture was a peculiar creature indeed, with one foot striding into the nineteenth-century world of liberal capitalism but with the other stuck in the eighteenth century world of deference, hierarchy, and privilege.⁵¹

Within plantation districts the two political parties, each headed by wealthy planters and urban merchants, differed more in emphasis than in ideology. Locally they often had more in common with each other than either had with their own parties in the more isolated non-plantation regions of the state. During a debate over a legislative bill to prohibit the circulation of notes printed out of state one astute editor noted a split within the ranks of the Democratic Party. "The Democrats who oppose it are mostly from the towns and trading points, representing, we suspect, those who have interest with the paper-financiers against the people." The editor added that "some of these gentry affect (in their speeches) to consider the bill 'an infringement of the people's rights.'" In other words, these Democrats had taken up the Whig argument.⁵²

The Whig Party's appeal in plantation districts, and the Democratic Party's appeal in the small farming regions of the pine barrens and hill country can be explained on a general level by regional differences in society owing to variation in wealth-holding, commitment to slavery, and

relationship to markets.⁵³ Within regions, and particularly within single counties, however, both parties drew their support from the same society, from similar people. Within a local context both parties operated within a common political culture, and were therefore not separated by fundamental ideological differences. Instead, family and neighborhood loyalties divided them.

The process of organizing a county community began with the moving of the courthouse to Vicksburg, and continued through the subsequent rise of that town to the apex of an economic and political structure that connected each rural settlement and village in every corner of the county. The salience of neighborhood loyalties in electoral politics demonstrated how incomplete the organizing process remained throughout much of the antebellum period even as the turn to government and elected politicians indicated its occurrence none the less. By about 1850, however, the county community emerged. Neighborhoods lost their political distinction. Political realignment reflected a new community order.

In 1851 political leaders suspended old partisan differences in a gubernatorial contest over one issue--secession. The preceding year saw the furor over Wilmot's Proviso come to a head in at Nashville, where a bipartisan convention discussed the expedience of a concerted southern response to what they deemed as northern aggression. They

decided little except to meet again in a second session. By that time, however, Congress had already worked out a compromise. The flames of disunion had been quenched in the hearts of all but the most heated fire-eaters. State elections served as a final plebiscite on the matter.⁵⁴

In Mississippi both candidates for governor were closely tied to Warren County. Henry Stuart Foote, U. S. Senator, resident of Jackson, former resident of Vicksburg, ran as a unionist in favor of accepting the Compromise of 1850. Jefferson Davis, Mississippi's other U. S. Senator, owner of a plantation in Warren County, campaigned against the compromise and for the states' right to secede, although he granted that at the moment disunion was not "practical." Both men had been Democrats. Foote had even been one of the instigators in Congress of the Nashville Convention, but had obviously changed his views in light of the compromise.⁵⁵

The seriousness of both the North's attacks on slavery and the South's attacks on the Union were enough to shatter old party lines. As a unionist editor stated: "Regarding the old party issues which have heretofore divided the country as wholly swept by, and merged in, the momentous question of 'Union or Disunion,' a question whose elements are treason, civil war and blood shed, we shall sever all our former political ties."⁵⁶ In the countryside contests were still lopsided. Individual voters still followed the lead of family and neighborhood leaders. But Milldale voters did not

oppose Warrenton voters as they had in the past. Instead, the rural areas of the county voted uniformly and overwhelmingly for Foote and the compromise. They presented no appearance of neighborhoods as discrete political units. Only in the most urban areas of the county, in Vicksburg and its suburbs in adjoining White House and Bovina precincts, where there had been a history of bipartisan competition did Davis and the secessionists find any support, perhaps among immigrant and Catholic workers who would not vote with their native-born and protestant neighbors.⁵⁷

Old partisan lines disappeared for good. Even after the politics of union and slavery died down, and the Whigs and Democrats made their return, politics in Warren County were never the same. Neighborhoods continued to oppose one another in local elections, but no longer in state and national elections.⁵⁸ Sectional politics had disrupted the local order beyond repair. Yet, the forces of change were not all external. Warren County had been undergoing a long process of restructuring. The debate over disunion and compromise found a county reaching out to a larger world, and thus more concerned with national politics and larger issues like slavery. Moreover, the county was no longer so divided into separate spheres of kin groups and rural neighborhoods as it once was. Warren County confronted the political issues of the 1850s as an integrated social and

economic unit, not as a collection of families and neighborhoods.

Notes

1. Hutchinson, Code of Mississippi, p. 98. Warren County Deed Book A, pp. 34-35. State Legislature, Minutes, RG 47, MDAH; The Republican (Vicksburg), May 4, 1825.
2. The concept of community as comprising vertical and horizontal dimensions comes from Darrett B. Rutman, "The Social Web: A Prospectus for the Study of the Early American Community," in Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History, ed. William L. O'Neill, (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1973). 57-89.
3. The road from Vicksburg to Jackson was built in 1823, the railroad in 1838. Connections to New Orleans were completed in 1858. Port Gibson Correspondent, January 31, 1823. Vicksburg Weekly Southern Sun, November 25, 1858. John Hebron Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 166, 173.
The classic account on transportation and the nation's economy in the nineteenth century remains: George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution 1815-1860 (New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Co., 1951).
4. Board of Police, Minutes, 1846, pp. 71-75.
5. Vicksburg Register, December 1, 1834.
6. Port Gibson Correspondent January 31, 1823.
7. Port Gibson Correspondent, August 4, 1825.
8. Port Gibson Correspondent, January 25, 1827. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, April 12, 1832.
9. In Mississippi, the land boom first began in 1820, following the Treaty of Doak's stand, in which the Choctaw Nation ceded a large piece of territory to the United States. Most of the speculators and settlers, however, came from older regions in Mississippi, Natchez in particular. See Edwin Arthur Miles, Jacksonian Democracy in Mississippi (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 19. By 1828-1830, according to Miles, settlement and development of Choctaw lands had created in Mississippi a demand for

more banking facilities, which the legislature met by the chartering of organizations like the Planters' Bank. The 1830s saw an even greater rush of population into new regions of Mississippi. For a description of the "flush times" by a contemporary see Joseph G. Baldwin, The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi: A Series of Sketches, with Introduction and Notes by James H. Justus (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), especially pp. 82-83.

The reasons for the land boom and surge of westward migration in the 1830s are complex, and still debated by historians. The traditional view holds that a loosening of credit following Jackson's transfer of federal deposits from the Bank of the United States to various state banks made funds more available to western speculators and homesteaders. An alternative views emphasizes the inflationary effects of foreign investment on increasing lands sales. In the south, however, the price of cotton, combined with the productivity of the new land relative to older cotton lands in the east, in the words of economic historian Douglass North, "triggered a land boom in the new South." Douglass C. North, The Economic Growth of the United States 1790-1860 (Englewoods Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 73. See also Peter Temin, The Jacksonian Economy, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969). Historian Lacy Ford describes how during the 1830s people were leaving the upcountry region of South Carolina for the relatively more productive new lands to the west: Lacy K. Ford, Jr. Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry 1800-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 37-43.

10. Vicksburg Register, November 19, 1835.

11. Vicksburg Register, November 13, 1834. Section indexes, township 17, range 4, sections 3, 4, and 7, WCC.

12. Will Book A, pp.78-80.

13. For the holdings of the Planters' Bank in Warren County, see the Sectional Indexes, particularly townships 16 and 17, range 3, WCC.

14. Halsell, "Vicksburg Speculator," pp. 233-37.

15. Vicksburg Register, January 15, 1834.

16. Vicksburg Register, January 15, 1834, March 29, 1832. Information on individual commissioners comes from the personal biographies compiled for the Study Data. John Hebron Moore, The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 164-66.

17. When developers in the Natchez region announced their intentions to build a railroad to Jackson, Vicksburg's merchants received added incentive to organize quickly before an alternative railroad could "ruin Vicksburg and reduce it to a Hamlet." Vicksburg Register, October 2, 1834.

18. Board of Police, Minutes 1831-1838, December 1835, pp. 200-201, January 1836, p. 204, OCHM.

19. Board of Police, Minutes 1838-1845, February 1839, p. 41, January 1842, p. 219, OCHM.

20. Board of Police, Minutes 1838-1845, May 1839, p.67, May 1840, p. 124, OCHM.

21. On the laws regarding roads see: Hutchinson, Code of Mississippi, pp. 251, 255, 257, 258. The Board of Police had authority to authorize the erection of gates on any public road except U.S. post roads. Careless travelers who left gates open were subject to a five dollar fine.

22. For examples of fines levied on farmers for stringing fences across roads see: Board of Police, Minutes 1838, p.354; 1842, p. 218; 1843, p.501; 1844, p.618; 1846, p. 31.

23. Board of Police, Minutes 1848, p.129.

24. Hutchinson, Code of Mississippi, p.258.

25. Board of Police, Minutes 1844, p. 608.

26. Statutes of the Mississippi Territory (Natchez, 1816), p.427. Territorial Legislature, RG 5, vol. 27, Petitions to the General Assembly, 1810-1816, untitled petition to keep the courthouse as Warrenton, 1815, MDAH. Petitions to the Legislature, container 17, January 1820. Board of Police, Minutes, January 1834, p. 94. Robert W. Harrison, "Levee Building in Mississippi Before the Civil War," Journal of Mississippi History 12 (April 1950), 63. On the frequency of flooding see: Monette, "Mississippi Floods," p. 443. During the first half of the nineteenth century "Extraordinary Floods" occurred twice each decade.

27. Board of Police, Minutes, 1846, p. 32, 1853, p. 711, 1854, pp. 20, 28, 71, 1858, p. 274, 1859, p. 304, 1860, pp. 416, 422-423. Petitions to the Legislature, container 17, Jan. 1820. Papers of Jefferson Davis, 3:119-20. The state legislature assessed a tax of \$1160 on Joseph Davis, and \$636 on Jefferson Davis. Turner's and Quitman's tax is not known, but surely took the total well over \$2000, and the taxes on another neighbor, one Robert Wood, may have raised the total to near \$3000.

28. Report on the Mississippi River Floods by the Committee on Commerce, United States Senate, 55th Congress, 3d Session, Report No. 1433 (1898).

29. Alice to Philan, n.d., Crutcher-Shannon Papers, box 1, folder 2, MDAH.

30. Board of Police, Minutes, February 1832, p. 27, May 1838, p. 354, October 1844, p. 623, 1854, p. 23.

The positive role of local governments in the process of economic development seems to have been greater in the South than in the North, at least in terms of dollars appropriated relative to funds secured from other sources. Northern developers relied more on private sources and on state governments rather than county and municipal governments. See Carter Goodrich, "Local Government Planning of Internal Improvements," Political Science Quarterly 66 (1951), 411-445. Goodrich noted that the "intermixture of common and individual interests, and of government and private means. . . was particularly marked in the case of local aid" for internal improvements. (p. 225). See all: Carter Goodrich, Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads 1800-1890 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 159-60, 170. In Mississippi before the Civil War county and municipal funds for railroads surpassed slightly the funds provided by the state government. Most state money, however, came from federal transfer payments of money raised from the sale on Indian lands. Thus, the money actually provided by the state government was minimal. The lack of support of state governments in the South, with the exception of Tennessee, stood in contrast to the leadership offered by the governments of New York and Ohio.

31. Port Gibson Correspondent, August 14, 1823; Election Returns, RG 28, vol. 12a, 1823, MDAH.

32. Port Gibson Correspondent, August 14, 1823.

33. Freeland appears on the 1818 tax role for Warren County, as part owner of a 1620 acre tract.

For further evidence of a relationship between voting behavior and level of economic/social development, see: Paul F. Bourke and Donald A. DeBats, "Structures of Political Involvement in the Nineteenth Century: A Frontier Case," Perspectives in American History New Series, 3 (1987), 207-238. On the Oregon frontier while settlements were at best loosely integrated into the larger society, voting patterns varied from neighborhood to neighborhood, indicating that a political system had yet to evolve. Partisan loyalties in these conditions "arose not from systemwide variables such as wealth, ethnicity, occupation, or even religion," (p. 233) but from the "idiosyncratic" (p. 237) development of

individual neighborhoods. M. Philip Lucas, "Beyond McCormick and Miles: The Pre-Partisan Political Culture of Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History 44 (November 1982), 329-348, emphasizes the local orientation of Mississippi antebellum politics.

The primary influence of local issues in Warren County politics until as late as the last decade before secession contradicts the argument presented by William Cooper in his book The South and the Politics of Slavery 1828-1856 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978). Cooper contends that the national issue of slavery was the driving force in southern politics from the Jacksonian years to the Civil War. He only considered presidential election years and based his research on newspaper editorials. Thus, Cooper looked for what voters or political leaders said they were doing or should do and not what they in fact did. Such a research strategy could lead nowhere but to his conclusions, conclusions that must be reconsidered, or even discarded, in light of evidence presented in several studies of voting behavior. See, for example, Robert C. Kenzer, Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), pp. 52-70. Southern localism is central to William W. Freehling's recent reinterpretation of the Old South: The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 298-299, 599-600.

34. Robert Kenzer found this to have been the case in Orange County, North Carolina. See: Kenzer, Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 62-66. Kenzer asserts that neighborhood voting patterns based on the strength of kinship ties were peculiarly southern, but then see the study of the Oregon frontier by Paul F. Bourke and Donald A. DeBats, "The Structure of Political Involvement in the Nineteenth Century: A Frontier Case," Perspectives in American History New Series, 3 (1987), 207-238. Neighborhood voting patterns existed as well in northern factory towns, owing to, among other things, the influence wielded by patriarchal bosses. See Ronald P. Formisano, The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 283-88.

35. Precinct returns for the presidential election of 1844 are not available. In 1848 Milldale voted along with the rest of the county in favor of Taylor. Vicksburg Whig, November 5, 1840; November 9, 1848.

36. See for example, the description of a public barbecue in the Vicksburg Sentinel, July 29, 1840.

37. Vicksburg Whig, December 2, 1844; December 9, 1844; December 23, 1844; April 22, 1845.

38. This discussion of Warren County politics confirms much of what Eugene D. Genovese suspected in his now classic essay "Yeoman Farmers in a Slaveholders' Democracy," originally published in Agricultural History, and revised and republished in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, ed. Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 249-64, esp. 262-63.

James Oakes, in The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), argues for a southern "middle-class politics that was as devoted to liberal democracy as it was to black slavery" (p. 143). By middle class Oakes intends masters with more than five but fewer than twenty slaves, and in particular such slaveholders who also derived part of their income from the practice of a profession (pp. 57-65). But his parameters are at best arbitrary, at worst designed to ensure that evidence supports his assertions. The majority of Warren County's officeholders fall into Oakes's definition of middle class. They also belonged to the wealthiest twelve percent of the population, and were in fact not in the middle at all, unless one defines middle so as to include most elites. Patterns of election and office-holding do not point to a middle class politics in Warren County. While Oakes did excuse the lower river counties of Mississippi as exceptional for their Whiggish "distaste for democracy" (146)--a distaste he did not attempt to explain--Warren County, as we have seen, led the democratic revolt against the Natchez Nabobs despite its deferential politics, despite becoming a Whig stronghold.

39. John H. Moore, "Local and State Governments of Antebellum Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History, 44 (May 1982), 105-106, 113-114.

40. Register of Appointments, County Officers, Warren County 1820, Series A, vol. N, roll 2108, MDAH. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, November 5, 1835.

41. See Appendix G, Table G-1.

42. See Appendix G, Table G-2.

43. Formisano, Transformation of Political Culture, p. 131.

44. Vicksburg Advocate and Register, August 9, 1832. Miles, Jacksonian Democracy in Mississippi, 37.

45. Port Gibson Correspondent January 22, 1824. Tax Rolls, Warren County, 1835.
46. Miles, Jacksonian Democracy in Mississippi, pp. 48-86.
47. The names of active party members collected from lists published in Vicksburg newspapers were linked with slaveholders listed on the 1835 tax roll and the 1850 census. During the 1830s Whigs owned on average 20 slaves, while Democrats owned on average only 10. Nevertheless a test of the relationship between party and slaveholding for 61 household heads active in party organizations produced an Eta of .20, which was not significant at the .05 level. In time differences in the size of slaveholding of active party members narrowed. By 1850 Whigs owned on average 18 slaves and Democrats owned 15.
48. Vicksburg Sentinel, October 21, November 9, November 19, 1839, July 16, 1845. Michael Holt found in Pittsburg a local politics driven by two negative reference groups: native-born protestant Whigs versus immigrant Catholic Democrats. Such a split existed in Vicksburg, but the numbers of Catholic immigrants were too small to have made it the basis of party alignment. See Michael F. Holt, Forging a Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1969). In his study of Cumberland County, North Carolina, Harry L. Watson an "overall indifference of ethnicity to party choice." See Watson, Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), p. 228. The absence of ethno-cultural voting patterns in the South was a consequence of, relative to the North, an absence of different ethno-cultural groups. Where such groups did exist, however, their influence on local politics was apparent. In Louisiana, for example, Francophone Catholics in the southern parishes voted against the Protestant Anglophones to the north. See Roger W. Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers during Slavery and After, 1840-1875 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968 [1939]), p. 150.
49. Vicksburg Sentinel, November 11, 1839. As Colonel Howard of Vicksburg put it, Democrats were not opposed to all banks, only "fraudulent and rotten banks." The more fearful believed all banks were or would soon become hopelessly rotten to the core. Others, like Howard, had faith that once exposed corruptions could be remedied "through the majesty of the ballot box." See the Sentinel, November 16, 1839.

50. Vicksburg Register, March 29, 1832, January 15, 1834. McNutt's efforts at bank reform are discussed in more detail in James Roger Sharp, The Jacksonians versus the Banks: Politics in the States after the Panic of 1837 (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970), 60-84. Sharp sees McNutt a hard money, anti-bank Democrat, but that analysis would seem to conflict with his activities as a banker, railroader, and land speculator. In any case, Sharp's account demonstrates that Democrats were rarely united against Whigs over the bank issue, but tended to fall on one side of the question or the other according to personal experience and interest. Few were ideologically opposed to banks.

51. This analysis of Warren County political culture supports Eugene D. Genovese's and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's interpretation of the slave South as "in but not of the capitalist world." See Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 16. For an opposing view see James Oakes, Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990). Oakes argues that North and South shared a common political culture and had since the Revolution. But his argument that a single culture embrace slavery in one region and free labor in another, and then spawned opposing notions of freedom begs the question. Were not distinct ideas of liberty indicative of distinct cultures?

52. Vicksburg Sentinel, February 9, 1848.

53. Many years ago Arthur C. Cole noted the appeal of Democratic candidates in new and non-plantation regions, and the attraction of Whigs in older, more developed, more commercialized plantation districts. See: Arthur C. Cole, The Whig Party in the South (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962 [1914]).

54. Thelma Jennings, The Nashville Convention: Southern Movement for Unity, 1848-1851 (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1980). Donald M. Rawson, "Party Politics in Mississippi, 1850-1860," Ph.D. dissertation (Vanderbilt University, 1964), 24-52.

55. Jennings, Nashville Convention, p. 5.

56. The quotation is from the prospectus for a new Unionist newspaper printed in the Vicksburg Whig, August 6, 1851.

57. See Appendix G, Table G-3.

58. In the 1853 election of governor all precincts gave a majority to the same candidate. A similar pattern prevailed in 1859 when all but one precinct gave a majority to the same candidate. The lone neighborhood to buck the county-wide trend did so by only two votes. Vicksburg Whig, November 15, 1853 and October 12, 1859.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps no state represented the Old South and all that it stood for more than did Mississippi. The state was both before and after the Civil War the leading producer of cotton in the country. In 1860 its slave population outnumbered its white population. The president of the Confederacy made his home in Mississippi. The state epitomized the South, and perhaps more than any other it still does. Yet, a close examination of economic and social history of the region around Vicksburg demonstrates that the most "southern" of the southern states was not always so. Initially, life in Mississippi differed little from life in such northwestern territories as Ohio and Illinois, and could not have been more different from the older regions of the southeast, the plantation districts of Virginia and the Carolinas.

Of course, Mississippi, and Warren County, did become plantation societies. But Virginia and Carolina planters, or their sons and daughters, did not simply transplant a fully conceived society in the red clays and black bottoms to the

west, although some certainly set out to do just that. But the society that developed in Warren County arose out of the material conditions presented by both local context and that locale's place within the world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Locally, material conditions constantly changed as people adapted their behavior to their environment, then changed their environment as they struggled to make a living, which forced them to alter patterns of behavior. All the while they adjusted and re-adjusted their world view, their understanding of the way the world worked, to make it conform to life as they lived it. Thus, the Old South, like any society, was forever in the process of becoming something else.

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century settlers of European descent arrived at the Loosa Chitto and Walnut Hills, the region of Mississippi that became Warren County. Although nearly all came from the thirteen colonies of the new United States of America their backgrounds were varied. Some had been small farmers in Connecticut or the Virginia backcountry, while others had been merchants in coastal cities such as New York. Once settled in the Lower Mississippi Valley, however, they adapted themselves in similar ways to the wilderness environment.

Slash-and-burn agriculture, hunting, trapping, and fur trading provided the basis the local economies of the first settlements along the Loosa Chitto and Walnut Hills. The

abundance of natural resources allowed for rapid capital accumulation. Families that arrived with little soon raised surpluses of corn and hogs beyond what they required for their own subsistence needs. Squatters exchanged agricultural surpluses along with furs and hides at distant trading posts for cash to purchase the land where they lived. Everyone traded for tools, supplies of salt and coffee, and a few consumer goods. However, markets were not very well developed during the initial settlement period. Homesteaders therefore endeavored to meet their own subsistence needs. When they fell short they turned to their neighbors for assistance.

Two local exchange networks appeared in the Loosa Chitto settlement. The first network represented a cooperative effort to assist individual households to meet subsistence needs. By distributing small quantities of select commodities available locally it reduced the inconvenience of temporary shortages and the frequency of trips to distant markets. The second network was less a cooperative enterprise between friends and neighbors and more of a business for householders who acted as local storekeepers. They imported supplies from Natchez or New Orleans which they re-sold locally for profit. Both networks arose in response to community isolation from national and international markets, and as ways of coping with the scarcity of supplies and manufactures.

Similarly, two systems of authority developed in the early settlements, one denoting their place within a larger political and economic entity, the other underscoring their remoteness from seats of power and trade. Relationships between neighbors were face-to-face, personal. In this context one's standing depended on one's local reputation, and on the honor bestowed upon an individual by the community. A second, more formal system of authority mediated relations between strangers. For example, creditors who did not know the local reputations of distant borrowers sought security from the formal authority of the court and the laws regulating debt and relief. However, both systems, one internal and informal, the other external and formal, operated simultaneously.

Thus the first communities in what became Warren County had two faces. One looked inward as interdependent households concentrated on raising their subsistence requirements in food, took small surpluses to market where they purchased items not available within the community, and exchanged commodities locally so as to minimize the inconvenience of interaction with the outside world. Another face gazed outward to distant markets and seats of formal authority. Over the period 1770 to 1860 communities continued to face two directions at once, although there occurred a noticeable shift in emphasis from the inward to the outward look.

Settlers along the Loosa Chitto and the Walnut Hills turned their heads outward toward the end of the eighteenth century following a heightening of tensions between Spain and the United States. The Spanish, who controlled Louisiana and the Natchez District, sought to protect their possession by constructing a series of forts along the Lower Mississippi River. The carpenters and masons who worked on the forts, plus the soldiers garrisoned there, provided a market for beef, which local farmers supplied. In 1798 when the Spanish turned the Natchez District over to the United States a rush of incoming migrants added to the market for beef. By 1800 several Loosa Chitto farmers kept herds of a hundred or more steers.

Changing local conditions also pushed farmers into the cattle market. The growing number of settlers, the disappearance of local wildlife, the waning of the fur trade, and the rolling back of the forests brought about the demise of the pioneer economy, forcing farmers to rely more on a market economy. In the early years of the nineteenth century these same conditions pushed farmers into the cotton market.

In 1795 the cotton gin made its appearance in the Natchez district. Prior to that date few Loosa Chitto farmers planted cotton except perhaps a little for their own use. But the appearance of the cotton gin cannot account for the development of staple agriculture in Warren County. Not

everyone took to planting cotton. By and large only cattle herders did. By selling portions of their stock herdsmen were able to raise capital needed to purchase gins and presses necessary for marketing cotton. More importantly, they were able to purchase slaves to work in cotton fields.

Nonslaveholders could have planted cotton, and continued to raise subsistence levels of corn and meat, but not without sacrificing time spent doing other chores, or doing nothing productive at all. Slaveholders, however, were able to raise their own subsistence requirements as before, and in addition plant cotton without altering their daily and seasonal work rhythms. Cotton planting, in other words, cost slaveholders nothing, while it required unacceptable sacrifices in time and energy from nonslaveholders, who simply chose not to plant cotton for market. Thus there lay a crucial connection between cattle herding, slaveownership, and cotton planting that explains the initial attraction of the cotton market for some farmers and its rejection by others.

The same process of changing material conditions that had ushered out the pioneer phase of development also hurried the end of the herding phase. As more people planted cotton, the cattle ranges shrunk. Cotton planters drained and tilled the low-lying marshes that had provided much of the pasture for herds. Cotton, once planted after a subsistence in meat and corn was secured, became an integral

and indispensable source of household income. For households with several slaves already this presented no problem. They planted more and more cotton. Families with few or no slaves, however, lost the opportunity of repeating the experiences of earlier settlers once cattle herding became impossible. They began to plant cotton not because they wanted to, necessarily; it was the only marketable commodity left to them. But income from cotton no longer went toward luxuries. It purchased food and other essentials. And as the forests were rolled back, as rains eroded the soil, as regular planting depleted the earth, households struggled to maintain their standard of living. So they planted even more cotton, which only accelerated a process that ended for individuals when they abandoned their farms.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the region between the Loosa Chitto and the Walnut Hills developed into a cotton and slave plantation society. Changes in material conditions stimulated a process of economic development, and corresponding changes in local society.

The growth of slavery and staple agriculture enlarged households, changed their racial composition, and altered relations between its members. In nonslaveholding homes women provided essential labor and skills. They contributed to the productive capacity of the household. When slaves relieved mistresses of these responsibilities, however,

women's relationships with male household heads changed. At the same time, slavery enhanced the man's power over all other household members. Paternalistic notions of family and gender followed this material and social change.

Overall, as personal wealth increased and resources diminished, households evolved from relatively simple social units organized mainly for production to more complex arrangements that also functioned to preserve and transmit property and status. Thus, while women became less important as producers, their reproductive role remained crucial to the family and household enterprise.

Relations between masters and slaves, and between the slaves themselves, also changed. In the early settlement period masters and slaves came together only when the former required the labor of the latter. The households and families of each had little or no place within this working relationship. Slaves spent much of their time away from their owners, earning their own keep by hiring themselves out to anyone who would pay for their services. With the rise of staple agriculture, however, masters demanded more of their laborers, and assumed for themselves a far greater role in the lives of their servants. Masters integrated the black household and family into the productive enterprise of the white household. This new context personalized the master-slave relationship to a greater degree, giving it a more significant place in the lives of individual blacks and

whites, and in the relationship of each person with the remaining members of the household.

At the same time, the slave household, and the families for which they functioned to protect and provide, did not disintegrate. Blacks took advantage of their increasing numbers to fashion a vital family life that would mitigate relations with their owners, and with whites generally. Masters did not oppose the efforts of their slaves to marry and raise children, however. Indeed, some actively encouraged slaves to raise large numbers of children by providing separate cabins for families and by removing young women from the fields to increase their fertility. Masters well understood that the reproduction of the slave family contributed to the productivity of the slaveholding household. But along with the development of slave households and families came an increase in the destructive interference of slaveholders in those families. Masters both encouraged black family formation and exercised the power to destroy families by separating and selling individual members. Such interference had a destabilizing effect on relations between masters and slaves, as well as on relations within slave families, that caused periodic explosions of violence.

With the continued growth of population, and the integration of local economies into a regional trading system, the character and definition of rural neighborhoods

changed. The geographical isolation that had distinguished them, and the close cooperation between households that had characterized social relations within them, diminished or disappeared altogether. Where once they had enabled individuals to improve their circumstances when markets remained undeveloped, neighborhoods increasingly functioned to serve the property-holding and wealth-accumulating interests of extended kin networks. As cotton planting became the only practical way of maintaining household income individuals looked to kin for access to land and slaves. At the same time extended families jealously guarded their collective resources. This placed tremendous power in the hands of the senior male members of the family, and was the basis of a local politics of patriarchy.

The essence of neighborhood politics, both within and between extended family groups, was the struggle for control over resources. People strived to maintain and build upon their holdings of land and slaves, and used whatever influence they possessed to this end. In their endeavors family was crucial. Each neighborhood had its one or two leading families. At the center of each family stood one or two men who were, in effect, the leaders not only of their respective clans but also of their neighborhoods. Personally wealthier than the average Warren County household head, clan patriarchs also had direct access to the property held by the other members of their families. And with control

over property came power. Dependents deferred to family and neighborhood leaders, and by granting them access to their own land and slaves enhanced the patriarch's power, who in return used his influence to protect the interests of the entire clan.

In time, however, patriarchal power waned as dependents abandoned the notion of ever succeeding in Warren County and so moved elsewhere. Also, outsiders, urban merchants in particular, provided services formerly supplied by neighborhood leaders. Kinship ties remained, linking households as before, but their significance diminished when they no longer corresponded with economic associations.

Villages and towns appeared in Warren County as centers for the collection of agricultural products and the distribution of manufactured goods. The growth of Vicksburg ultimately reoriented trading patterns within the county by channeling lines of communication between the county and the outside world. While the wealthiest planters, particularly those with river frontage, continued to deal directly with commission houses in New Orleans, inland farmers and planters sold their cotton and purchased manufactured goods and supplies through any one of the many forwarding merchants in town.

Although Vicksburg remained primarily a cotton-marketing town it nevertheless developed its own society quite distinct from the countryside. Its population consisted

of recent arrivals from Europe, the northern United States, and the countryside beyond Warren County. Its social order was much more complex, and included a wider variety of occupations and levels of wealthholding than in the countryside. Moreover, town society lacked the stabilizing influence of kinship and relationships based on patriarchy and dependence. Instead, a different order developed in the more fluid urban environment. Voluntary organizations provided some structure, linking elites and distinguishing established, more permanent residents from newcomers, while at the same time providing a means of integrating newcomers into established society. But stability came to Vicksburg's society when its residents seemed to accept the inevitability of social diversity and competing interests, expressed in bipartisan political competition.

Two-party competition never existed in the rural neighborhoods of antebellum Warren County. Unlike in Vicksburg, family allegiance and patriarchal structures of authority precluded political competition in the countryside. In time, however, as their interests extended far beyond their local environs, rural residents developed a greater interest in state and national politics, which seemed more relevant than before. While individual neighborhoods continued to disagree over local issues, increasingly they began to set aside local rivalries when they turned their attention to state and national issues. In

1850 and 1851 the threat of disunion caused them to discard localism once and for all and to face united the political issues of the ensuing decade.

APPENDIX A THE STUDY DATA

This study of Warren County rests on a large body of evidence, referred to in the end notes and in the sources for tables and figures as the Study Data. I compiled this data base largely though not exclusively from the public records of Warren County, which I broke down or stripped of pertinent information--name, date of birth, date of marriage, name of mother, and so forth--and then reassembled in the form of some six thousand machine-readable personal biographies. The process is tedious and time consuming. At the moment the data base is complete from the arrival of the first settlers in the 1770s to 1835. Every person who managed to get her name on the public record during those years should be in the Study Data, although in some cases individual files consist of nothing more than a name. Moreover, I continued to strip records from the period after 1835 in order to complete the files of individuals who lived in Warren County prior to that date. Thus, for example, I searched cemetery records through the end of the century to find dates of death for people in the Study Data. Ideally, I would have liked to have completed the data base to 1860, but eventually one reaches a point of diminishing returns

for time invested. For the period after 1835 I have relied mostly on the manuscript census schedules for 1850 and 1860.

To further illustrate the method of record stripping, I offer an example: Jacob Hyland. I first came across his name in the 1810 census [Census of Claiborne and Warren Counties, 1810, RG 28, microfilm roll #546, MDAH. This census has been published: Madel Jacobs Morgan, ed. "Census of Claiborne and Warren Counties, Mississippi Territory, 1810," Journal of Mississippi History 13 (January 1951): 50-63. However, only the original manuscript distinguishes Warren County from Claiborne County residents]. Court records listed him as a landholder in 1797 [May Wilson McBee, comp. The Natchez Court Records, 1767-1805: Abstracts of Early Records (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), p. 363], but a year earlier a neighbor mentioned the Hyland family in an account book [George Rapalje note book, typescript, MDAH]. Thus, in 1796 Jacob Hyland first appeared in Warren County, although at that time he probably lived with his father. Land records enabled me to locate his place of residence, and to track his moves over the years [Private Claims and Field Notes in Mississippi, microfilm roll 14, case #31476, MDAH. McBee, Natchez Court Records, p. 363. Orphans' Court Book B, p. 408, WCC. Deed Book C, pp. 159-61, WCC. Sectional Indexes, townships 14 and 15 north, range 3 east, WCC]. At the time of his arrival in Warren County Jacob was 17 years old. Cemetery records, plus a family

bible, give his date of birth [Marlene Rutland Brooks and Lisa Yarbrough Grant, comp. "Words in Stone," 3 volumes of cemetery records for Warren County, in OCHM. Jacob Hyland Bible record also in OCHM]. The bible, court records, the neighbor's account book, plus a will all helped identify Jacob's parents and siblings [Rapalje Note Book, MDAH. Will Book A, pp. 17-18, WCC]. For the years 1810, 1820, and 1830 census records indicate the size of his household, plus the gender and age distribution of its members [For 1810 see above. MS Population Schedules for Warren County, 1820 and 1830, available on microfilm]. Census plus tax records give his wealth holding in land and slaves [Personal Tax Rolls, Warren County, 1810, 1818, 1820, 1825, 1830, 1835, MDAH]. Cemetery records tell me that Jacob Hyland died in 1830.

While scanning records for such vital information as date of birth, I also noted every occasion that the record mentioned Jacob Hyland's name. This allowed me to flush out more of Hyland's life history by supplementing his machine readable file with qualitative information. I noted, for example, the details of the occasions when the court appointed him guardian, or made him the administrator of an estate, when he served as a witness to a legal transaction, when he put up security for someone else. I noted that at his death he owned one quarter interest in the press used by the Vicksburg Register. This enabled me to get a more intuitive sense of Hyland's life history, his place and

stature in his family and community, than I could have had I collected only the easily quantifiable data. But where I have made use of this more qualitative evidence I have given the full citations. Study Data refers only to the machine readable data base.

APPENDIX B
LOCAL EXCHANGE PATTERNS

Table B-1
Mean Prices of Commodities Bought and Sold, 1789-1797

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	n
Sugar				
Market Purchase Price	.32	.21	.50	4
Local Sale Price	.38	.38	.38	3
Coffee				
Market Purchase Price	.44	.38	.63	5
Local Sale Price	.50	.50	.50	3

SOURCE: Rapalje Notebook, typescript, MDAH.

Table B-2
Participation in Local Exchange, by Sex

	Females	Males
Borrowing and Lending	78	23
Buying and Selling	22	77
	100%	100%
	n=9	n=60

$\chi^2=8.53$ d.f.=1 significance=.0035
lambda=.24

SOURCE: Rapalje Notebook, typescript,
MDAH.

APPENDIX C CATTLE, SLAVES AND COTTON

Table C-1 gives the standardized regression coefficients for several variables that might be expected to influence variations in the amount of cotton reported in probate inventories. Non-productive wealth, for example, could be sold during a financial crisis, and thus might have been a safety against the risk of planting cotton. This hypothesis is not supported, however. Similarly, cotton production did not vary with the number of adult white males (over age 21 as reported by the census) and free blacks living in the household. Of course, women and children also worked in fields, and so family size might also have influenced cotton production; this hypothesis is not supported either. Only the value of slave property, a proxy for the number and productivity of slaves, indicates a relationship with cotton inventories. The partial correlation coefficient indicates that slave value accounts for forty-four percent of the variation in cotton inventories.

Table C-1
Multiple Regression and Partial Correlation Coefficients
for Cotton Production
(Dependent variable is pounds of cotton)

	Standardized Coefficient	t-value	r ²
Value of Non-Productive Wealth	-.26	-1.42	.04
Number of Adult White Males and Free Blacks	-.24	-1.19	.00
Household Size, Including Slaves	-.59	-2.00	.22
Number of Whites	.31	1.50	.00
Value of Slave Property	1.14**	3.47	.44*

$$R^2 = .36$$

$$n = 32$$

* - indicates significance at the .01 level.

** - indicates significance at the .005 level.

SOURCE: see Table C-2.

Table C-2 indicates a strong positive relationship between cattle and slaves. There would appear to be no relationship between corn and cotton, although this may be a product of seasonal variations in inventory accounts of crops. Also, there is only a weak, negative association between hogs and slaves.

Table C-2
Multiple Regression and Partial Correlation Coefficients for
Slaveholding
(dependent variable is size of slaveholding)

	Standardized Coefficient	t-value	r ²
Bushels of Corn	.05	.43	.06
Number of Cattle	.72***	4.59	.29**
Number of Hogs	-.21	-1.37	.10

$$R^2 = .39$$

$$n = 119$$

** - indicates significance at the .001 level.

*** - indicates significance at the .0001 level.

SOURCES: Claiborne County Records, Estates, Appraisements and Inventories of, Microfilm roll # 70, MDAH; Inventories from probate file boxes, WCC; Orphans Court Minute Book A,

Old Court House Museum; Orphans Court Minute Book B, WCC; Probate Court Account Book D, WCC; 1820 and 1830 Census, Population Schedules; Madel Jacobs Morgan, "Census of Claiborne and Warren Counties, Mississippi Territory, 1810," Journal of Mississippi History 13 (January, 1951), 50-63.

As a source of agricultural data, probate inventories pose serious problems. Often, appraisers simply ignored the value of crops, particularly if they were still in the field. The appearance of crops in inventories also varied according to the season. No inventories reported cotton during the summer months of June, July, and August, while corn reported for the same season averaged only five or six bushels. Spring inventories had the most cotton on hand, while winter accounts reported the greatest number of bushels of corn. In addition, coming as they do, generally, at the end of the life cycle, inventories give a biased account of wealthholding, which usually peaked late in life before declining somewhat during old age. Inventories also do not account for property given away as bequests just prior to death. They also misrepresent household size, which could be either reduced if children have grown and are living elsewhere, or expanded if the decedent at time of death lived in a grown child's household. Nevertheless, as a source of agricultural data, they are all that is available before the agricultural schedules of the 1850 census. On the necessary precautions of using probate inventories, see: Gloria L. Main, "Probate Records as a Source for Early American History," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., 32

(1975), 89-99; Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh,
"Inventories and the Analysis of Wealth and Consumption
Patterns In St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1658-1777,"
Historical Methods 13 (Spring, 1980), 81-82.

APPENDIX D HOUSEHOLDS

Table D-1
White Household Members

	1796	1810	1820	1830	1850
% nuclear family households		60	53	47	49
% single person households	13	12	17	11	
av. number of whites	5	5	5	5	7
av. number of children		3	3	2	2
N	23	127	279	672	1232

Sources U.S. Census, Population schedules, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1850, 1860; Rapalje Notebook, MDAH; Abstract of Census, Mississippi Territory, 1801, Pickering County, microfilm roll #546, MDAH.

Table D-2
Percentage of White Population Living in Nuclear Family Households

	Year			
	1810	1820	1830	1850
Percentage	50	45	37	37

Source: U.S. Census, Population Schedules, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1850.

The 1796 Households

The number of whites per household for 1796 was estimated by using the census made by Jacques Rapalje in 1796, which gives number of households and size (including

slaves), and the aggregate census for 1800, which gives the number of whites and slaves. In 1796 there were 132 people in 23 households on the Big Black River. How many were slaves is not known. In 1800, however, there were 29 slaves. If there were the same number of slaves for the earlier date, then that would leave 103 whites, or 4.5 whites per household. Twenty-nine is surely too many slaves, thus the estimate of the number of whites is lower bound.

Alternatively, if the number of whites in 1800 is divided by the number of households for 1796, then the average number of whites per household is 5.6, a figure that is upper bound because there were surely more households by the later date. Thus, 5 whites per household is the estimate for both 1796 and 1800. The latter source was published in 1801 as "The Second Census, 1800," but contains typographical errors that need to be corrected with the hand-written abstract in the MDAH.

Method for Estimating the Number of Nuclear Family Households

Before 1850 the decennial census did not list household members other than the head. The relationship between other members to the head of the household can thus only very roughly be estimated. I counted any household with an adult male and/or female with or without children (children being residents under 21 but young enough to plausibly be a child)

as a nuclear family household. All remaining households were non-nuclear. These rules were applied intuitively, however. Obviously, an adult couple in their twenties could not be parents to a child between sixteen and twenty-one years of age. Likewise, a woman aged eighteen living with a very young child was considered a nuclear family.

When this method was applied to the 1850 census, for which household composition is known, the count proved to be 4 to 12 percent too low, depending on whether I counted adults as age 21 and older or 16 and older. In other words, the method of counting nuclear family households in the 1810 census (people age 21 and older were considered adults) undercounted by perhaps 5 percent, while in the 1820 and 1830 censuses (people age 16 and older were considered adults) undercounted by as much as 10 or 12 percent. The corrected estimates appear in the above tables.

The method for estimating the percentage of nuclear family households could have biased the results in the above tables. As the population aged over time, a greater percentage of actual nuclear families would have been dropped from the estimate, which by including primarily adults with children is biased towards young families. As the table below shows, the average age of household heads did increase with each census. But if this biased the results, it did so unnoticeably. I would expect a correlation between the age of the household head and the

type of household (nuclear/non-nuclear). No statistically significant correlation existed: $r^2=.47$ (1810) $r^2=.25$ (1820) $r^2=.15$ (1830).

Table D-3
Age of Household Heads

	Mean Age	Min. Age	Max. Age	Std. Dev.	N
1810	33.17	20	41	8.08	6
1820	34.70	20	53	11.04	23
1830	36.01	20	75	11.14	87

Sources: U.S. Census, Population Schedules, 1810, 1820, 1830.

Table D-4
Men per 100 Women, 1800 (age 16 or older)

Location	Men	Women	Ratio
Walnut Hills	14	8	175
Big Black River	37	24	154
Bayou Pierre	162	106	153
Combined region	213	138	154

Source: Second Census, 1800, "Schedule of the whole number of Persons in the Mississippi Territory." See also, "Abstract of Census, Mississippi Territory, 1801, Pickering County [later Jefferson, Claiborne, and Warren Counties]", microfilm roll #546, MDAH.

This ratio of men/100 women higher than was typical of frontier areas. From 1800 to 1840, the ratio in southern frontier areas hovered around 120/100. Northern frontier areas fluctuated more, ranging from 108/100 in 1800 to 143/100 in 1840, but were nevertheless comparable to the ratio in southern frontier areas. See James E. Davis,

Frontier America 1800-1840: A Comparative Demographic
Analysis of the Frontier Process (Glendale, California:
 Arthur H. Clark, 1877), p. 75, Table 16.

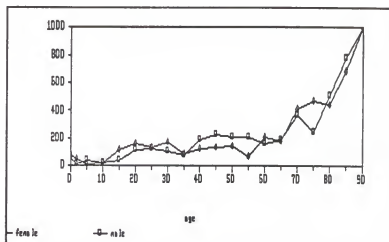
Table D-5
 Wealth Holding of Household Heads with Highest Degrees
 Relative to Other Warren County Heads of Household

	Av. Slaveholding	Av. Acreage
Extended Family Heads	16	379
Family of Extended Family Heads	63	1427
All Household Heads	4	83

Source: Study Data.

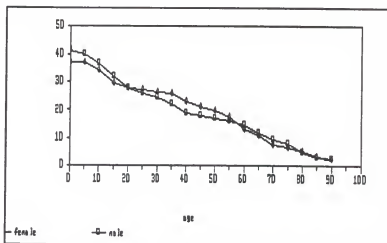
APPENDIX E MORTALITY AND FERTILITY

Figure E-1
Mortality for Men and Women Born before 1860



Source: Study Data.

Figure E-2
Life Expectancy by Age, for Men and Women Born before 1860



Source: Study Data.

Table E-1
Crude Fertility Ratios
(children under age 10 per 1000 women ages 16 to 45)

YEAR	RATIO
1800	2273
1830	1552*
1850	1204

* - For 1830 the ratio was calculated using women of age 15 through 49, thus is low relative to ratios for the other years. If the calculation is made using only women of age 15 through 40 the ratio increases to 1760, but nevertheless indicating a steady decline in fertility over time.

Sources: U.S. Census, 1810, 1830, 1850. For a comparison with other places in the nineteenth-century U.S., see: Davis, Frontier America, 1800-1840: A Comparative Demographic Analysis of the Frontier Process (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1977), p.169; John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p.253 n3.

APPENDIX F SLAVE HIRING

The historical literature on slavery pays scant attention to the incidence of slave hiring in the antebellum South. Although historians differ slightly in their estimates of the number of slaves in rural areas who were hired out, placing the figure between five and ten percent, they do agree that with the possible exception of the urban areas of the Upper South the subject warrants little attention. Genovese, for example, devotes two pages in his more than six hundred page book on slavery to question of hiring. I suggest, however, that the subject of slave hiring seems unimportant only because we know so little about it, and that more imaginative research will show that hiring was more widespread, and that it was integral to the slaves' experience.

The number of slaves leased by their owners is difficult to establish. Censuses did not report whether household heads owned or rented the slaves who lived on their farms. Contracts, which might have been, and sometimes were, recorded in county deed books, or in probate records when guardians rented out the slave property of wards, are an obvious source. Yet they, too, are scarce, thus creating

the impression of a low incidence of slave hiring. Qualitative evidence suggests otherwise, however. Clearly, we need better estimates of the incidence of hiring.

The 1860 census free and slaves population schedules provides both the number of slaves and the personal property (including slaves) in dollars for all slaveholders. This is enough information to permit an estimation of the extent of slave hiring. If we assume that, on average, slaveholders had approximately x in nonslave personal property, and that slaves cost, on average, y , then we would expect a household head with S slaves to have personal property worth $(S \times y) + x$. Personal property equal to or greater than this amount would indicate that the slaveholder most likely owned all the slaves enumerated under his name by the census taker. Personal property less than the expected amount would indicate that the household head was probably renting slaves.

In 1860 the mean personal property of rural Warren County slaveholders with more than one slave was \$1200. Roger L Ransom offers the most recent estimate of average slave price, which he places at about \$800. This figure might be high, in that the least valuable slaves, the old and the young, were under-represented in the slave market from which average prices are calculated. Probate inventory estimates of average slave value, which tended to be \$300 or \$400 lower than average sale prices, support this point.

Although appraisers might have been tempted to undervalue property somewhat in order to minimize tax assessments, they would not have deliberately miscalculated to this extent. Furthermore, average slave value of \$800 would leave an average nonslave personal property of \$400, which might be low. Lee Soltow estimated average nonslave personal property of \$600 for slaveholders with more than three slaves. Thus, we assume average nonslave personal property (x) was \$500, and average slave value (y) was \$700.

The number of household heads most likely to have rented slaves can be calculated: If $TP < (S \times 700) + 500$ then the slaveholder is a renter, where TP is total personal property, and S is the number of slaves. The calculation suggests that 20% of Warren County's rural slaveholders rented at least one slave.

The number of slaves rented by each slaveholders can also be calculated with the following equation: $(TP - 500) / 700$. In rural Warren County, in 1860, renters rented on average 10 slaves, for a total of 911, or 9% of the slave population.

If the actual value of slaves was higher than the estimate of \$700 used here, then the estimated incidence of slave renting increases. For example, if slaves were actually worth on average \$1000, then the estimated number of renters increases to 45%. Although such a high incidence of slave hiring seems unlikely, nevertheless, the estimate

could well be low. Although it is possible that differences in the value of slaves owned by small- and large-holders might mean that the estimate is too high, this is unlikely. If poorer slaveholders owned slaves of less value than the average, then the figure of 20% would be high. But this was not the case. Holders of five or fewer slaves tended to have greater personal property per slave than holders with more than five slaves, probably because small-holders were less likely than large-holders to own lower-priced infant or aged slaves. Thus, the estimate of 20% should be considered low rather than high.

Estimating the incidence of slave hiring for years before the 1860 census requires a different method because personal property is not known. Instead, we must compare the slaveholdings reported by the census with those recorded on county tax rolls. There are three approaches, illustrated with data for 1810. First: A substantial number of slaveholders appeared on the census but not on the tax roll, presumably because they did not own the slaves who lived in their household. The presumption may be incorrect, but accepting it for the moment, we find that 23% of the slaveholders recorded by the census did not pay taxes on any slaves. Most of these slaveholders, however, did not appear on the 1810 tax roll at all, although we would expect all adult males present in Warren County to have been assessed at least a poll tax. Perhaps they owned their slaves, but

the tax collector overlooked them, or maybe they were absent from the county at tax time but present when the census enumerator arrived. If we assume that the slaveholders listed on the census paid taxes on all their slaves even though they did not appear on the tax role, then the estimate of the incidence of slave hiring drops considerably, to 13% of slaveholding heads of household. We are left with two estimates, which can be considered high and low boundaries with the actual figure somewhere in between.

Of course, we have not taken into account slaveholders who owned and rented at once. Again, using the data for 1810, several slaveholders listed as such on both lists were found to have more slaves under their names in the census than in the tax roll, suggesting that perhaps they rented the extra slaves. Adding their number to the estimate raises the high and low estimates to 35% and 25% of slaveholding heads of household.

The problem may be approached a second way. The assumption that slaveholders who rented slaves did not pay the taxes on them may be incorrect. Perhaps the renters paid the taxes, but the actual owners had the slave counted by their name in the census. Using the same approach described above, but starting with slaveholders who paid taxes on slaves, but who were not listed as slaveholders in the census, we get two new high and low estimates, 10% and 5% of

taxpaying slaveholders.

The estimate varies considerably, depending on whether one assumes that the renters or the owners paid the taxes on the slaves. Most likely, both occurred. Long term contracts of a year probably required the renter to pay the tax, while the owners who hired their slaves out to different people every few weeks or months must have paid the taxes. The problem might best be approached in a third way. In 1810, 76% of all slaveholding heads of household appeared on both lists with exactly the same number of slaves. Presumably, they did not hire out any slaves, nor use hired labor. And presumably, the remaining 24% did. If there was one buyer for every seller of hired slave labor, then 12% of the slaveholding heads of household rented at least one slave. This estimate falls between those given above, and is thus the most acceptable. Table F-1 summarizes the results for 1810, 1820, and 1830, and also includes counts of the slaves involved.

Table F-1
Estimates of the Incidence of Slave Hiring

	1810	1820	1830	1860
% of slaveholders who rent:				
first method	25-35	42-54	45-59	20
second method	5-10	20-39	12-31	
third method	12	34	34	
% of slaves involved:				
first method	26	18	24	9
second method	7	19	15	
third method	10	9	17	

Sources: Study Data. For estimates of the extent of slave hiring, see: Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South 1820-1860: A Quantitative History (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 36, Table 8, which gives a figure of 5% for females and 6% for males in rural Virginia, 1860; Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 56, which uses Goldin's figure; Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p.390, gives a rate of 5% to 10% of all slaves, although how he arrived at the figure is not clear. On slave prices, see Roger L. Ransom, Conflict and Compromise: The Political Economy of Slavery, Emancipation, and the American Civil War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 75, Table A.3.3. See also, Robert Evans, Jr. "The Economics of American Negro Slavery" in Universities National Bureau Committee for Economic Research, Aspects of Labor Economics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 185-243; and Goldin, Urban Slavery, pp. 72-73, Table 24. For an estimate of the amount of personal property accounted for by slaves versus other property, see Lee Soltow, Men and Wealth in the United States 1850-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 137.

APPENDIX G
CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS

Below is a list of the occupations reported in the 1860 manuscript census for Vicksburg, and the classifications into which they were placed:

PROFESSIONAL

dentist, probate judge, justice of the peace, lawyer, attorney, magistrate, music teacher, physician, school teacher, teacher, preacher, priest

MERCHANT-SERVICE

barkeeper, beerhouse, billiard hall keeper, boarding house, book merchant, book store, brewery, clothing merchant, coffee house, commercial merchant, dry goods merchant, eating house, feed store, fruit store, furniture dealer, grocer, grocery, hotel keeper, merchant, china merchant, tin merchant, ice merchant, hide merchant, music store, negro trader, produce merchant, restaurant, saloon keeper, beer saloon, shoe store, tin store, trader

CLERICAL

agent, auctioneer, banker, book agent, bookkeeper, brakes clerk, city marshall, clerk, city collector, rail road conductor, constable, county ranger, druggist, editor, express agent, express clerk, gin agent, insurance agent, jailor, jail guard, mail guard, mayor, petitioner, policeman, sheriff, deputy sheriff, rail road superintendent, city hospital superintendent

SKILLED LABOR

artist, baker, blacksmith, boilermaker, bookbinder, boot maker, brick layer, cabinet maker, carpenter, coachmaker, confectioner, contractor, dress maker, founder, gunsmith, harness maker, jeweller, wagon maker, watch maker, machinist, mechanic, milliner, pattern maker, piano tuner, plasterer printer, saddle maker, sawyer, sewing, shoe maker, silversmith, stone cutter, stone mason, tailor, telegraph operator, tinsmith, upholsterer

SEMI-SKILLED LABORER

barber, butcher, cook, finisher, gas fitter, gin wright, layer, levying, midwife, mill man, painter, crack painter, pilot, apprentice saddler, saw mill, shingle maker, apprentice watchmaker

UNSKILLED LABORER

boatman, steamboatman, city watch, drying cloth, dirt digger, drayman, fishing, gardener, gas work, house mover, laborer, livery stable, marble yard, miner, peddler, raftsmen, railroad, servant, soapmaker, steward, washing, watchman, working

APPENDIX H ELECTIONS AND OFFICE HOLDING

Not until 1860 did Warren County's wealthier slave- and landowners begin to lose their grip on public office. In that year elected officials, while still wealthier than household heads in general, did not possess as many slaves or as valuable land as other property owners.

Table H-1		
Office Holding and Non-Officeholding Propertyowner		
	1850	1860
Size of Slaveholding		
Office holding slaveowner	20	15
Non-office holding slaveowner	16	18
Value of Landholding		
Office holding landowner	8557	9889
Non-office holding landowner	4991	12096

Sources: United States Census, Warren County, Mississippi, 1850 and 1860, Population Schedules.

Table H-2					
Wealth in Slaves of Office Holders, 1810-1860					
	1810	1820	1830	1850	1860
Av. size of slaveholding	10	8	9	20	15
Slaveholding percentile	90	86	80	89	87
% owning no slaves	18	22	3	24	20
Number of officeholders	11	36	32	29	35

Sources: Register of Appointments, County Officers, Series A, vol. N, roll 2108, MDAH. Elections Returns, Warren County, RG 28, MDAH. Vicksburg Daily Whig, November 8, 1841; November 5, 1847; November 11, 1843; November 7, 1845. Vicksburg Weekly Whig, November 14, 1849; November 12, 1851; November 12, 1853; October 13, 1858; October 12, 1859. Tax Rolls, Warren County, 1810, 1820, 1830, RG 29, MDAH. United States Census, Warren and Claiborne Counties, RG 28, microfilm 546, MDAH. United States Census, Mississippi, 1820, 1830, 1850, 1860, population schedules, microfilm.

Table H-3

Election Results by Precinct, Governor's Election, 1851

	Foote	Davis	Percentage of vote for Foote
Vicksburg	431	334	56
Bovina	58	58	50
White House	6	21	22
Warrenton	152	52	75
Milldale	49	14	78
Oak Ridge	40	15	73
Thornley's	7	2	78

Source: County Election Results, Vicksburg Whig, November 12, 1851.

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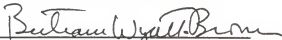
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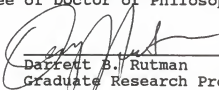
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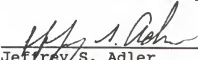
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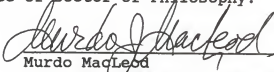
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August, 1991

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